

TAMPEREEN YLIOPISTO

Johtamiskorkeakoulu

The Untapped Potential of International Alumni

“STREET CREDIBILITY AND PRESTIGE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS”

Korkeakouluhallinto ja -johtaminen
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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this research is to shed light to the complex relationship of the international alumni and the Finnish higher education institutions (HEIs). This is done by identifying what tasks and roles are designated to the international alumni by the Finnish HEIs in general and specifically regarding education export. The theoretical framework of the research consists of the New Public Management (NPM) and the New Public Governance (NPG) -models.

The research was conducted as a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews. The empirical data consisted of the transcribed interviews of the seven elite-informants from two higher education institutions chosen as the research cases. The data was analysed using the inductive methods, first by approaching it with an empirical data-driven approach and then with a theory-driven approach.

Research concerning international alumni and the roles and tasks designated to them had not been conducted in Finland before and this inspired the decision to choose this topic. This research indicated three key roles, customer, stakeholder and partner, and nine tasks that the HEIs designate to the international alumni. The identified nine tasks, such as education ambassador and source of leads, can create competitive advantage to any HEI with a functioning international alumni network.

The NPM and NPG models provided lenses to recognise what roles and tasks the case-study HEIs designated to the international alumni and why these were chosen. The research showed that the case-study HEIs operated under the premises of the theoretical frame. The international alumni operations in the case-study HEIs are underdeveloped and in preliminary stages, but nevertheless add value to the HEIs and their education export efforts.

The results of the research can be used to develop HEIs alumni operations and education export efforts as well as basis for policy changes, such as a Ministry of Education funding mechanism measuring the development of international alumni operations or as a strategic focus where HEIs could distinguish themselves and gain competitive advantage against other HEIs. Further qualitative research can include the development of alumni networks, the perspective of alumni regarding the identified tasks and roles, the Ministerial policy changes regarding international alumni and the regional effects international alumni might have in areas where the HEIs are located.

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on tuottaa uutta tietoa kansainvälisten alumni ja suomalaisten korkeakoulujen suhteesta. Tutkimus tunnistaa mitä tehtäviä ja rooleja korkeakoulut asettavat kansainvälisille alumneille yleisesti ja erityisesti koulutusvientiin liittyen. Tutkimuksen teoreettinen pohja on New Public Management ja New Public Governance -malleissa.

Tutkimus toteutettiin puolistrukturoituina laadullisina haastatteluina. Empiirinen data koostui seitsemän eliittinformantin litteroiduista haastatteluista, jotka toteutettiin kahdessa tapauskorkeakoulussa. Aineisto analysoitiin induktiivisella metodilla, ensin aineistolähtöisesti ja sitten teorialähtöisesti.

Tutkimusta kansainvälisten alumni rooleista ja tehtävistä korkeakouluissa ei oltu tutkittu aiemmin Suomessa ja se inspiroi tutkimusaiheen valinnassa. Tutkimuksen tuloksena tunnistettiin kolme roolia, asiakas, osakas ja partneri, ja yhdeksän tehtävää, jotka tapauskorkeakoulut asettavat kansainvälisille alumneille. Tunnistetut yhdeksän tehtävää, kuten koulutusvientilähtöisyys ja koulutusvientitapausten lähde, voivat luoda kilpailuetua korkeakouluille, joilla on toimiva kansainvälisten alumni verkosto.

NPM ja NPG -mallit toimivat suurennuslaseina tutkimukselle, jossa tunnistettiin tapauskorkeakoulujen kansainvälisille alumneille asettamia tehtäviä ja rooleja ja miksi ne valittiin. Tutkimus näyttää, että tapauskorkeakoulut toimivat NPM ja NPG -mallien puitteissa. Kansainvälinen alumnitoiminta tapauskorkeakouluissa on kehittymätöntä ja alkuvaiheessa, mutta kaikesta huolimatta tuottaa lisäarvoa korkeakouluille ja niiden koulutusvientipyrkimyksille.

Tutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan hyödyntää korkeakoulujen kansainvälisen alumnitoiminnan ja koulutusviennin kehittämässä sekä politiikkaratkaisissa, kuten Opetusministeriön rahoitusmekanismi, jolla mitataan kansainvälisen alumnitoiminnan kehittymistä tai korkeakoulujen strategisena painopistealueena, jolla erottaudutaan muista ja luodaan kilpailuetua suhteessa muihin korkeakouluihin. Jatkotutkimuksen aiheiksi suositellaan alumniverkostojen kehittämistä, tutkimuksen toistamista alumni perspektiivistä, mahdollisten politiikkalinjojen muuttamista Opetusministeriössä suhteessa kansainväliseen alumnitoimintaan sekä kansainvälisen alumnitoiminnan alueellista vaikuttavuutta korkeakoulupaikkakunnilla.

CONTENT

ABSTRACT.....	1
TIIVISTELMÄ	2
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	5
1.1 Research Background and Importance of the Research	5
1.2 Purpose of the Research and Research Question.....	7
1.3 Researcher's Position.....	9
1.4 Research Structure	10
1.5 Core Concepts.....	11
Education export	11
Relationship.....	12
Customer	13
Partnership.....	13
Stakeholder	14
Internationalisation	15
Alumnus and alumni.....	15
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH PHENOMENON	17
2.1 Alumni Research	18
Finnish Literature	18
International Literature.....	21
2.2 Conclusions of the Review	23
CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	23
3.1 Public Administration	23
3.2 New Public Administration and New Public Governance Research Trends	24
3.3 NPM, NPG, Governance and HEIs.....	28
3.3 Synthesis	33
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	34
4.1 Qualitative Research Approach	36
4.2 Critique Towards Qualitative Research Approach.....	38
4.3 Research Material and Methods	39
Written and Online Research Material	40
Literature Review	40

Research Interview	40
4.4 The Case, the Case-study HEIs and the Elite-Informants	43
The Case-study HEIs	45
The Elite-Informants	48
Confidentiality	51
4.5 Research Execution	52
4.6 Research Analysis	56
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS	60
5.1 Informants' Viewpoints of the Complex Definition of International Alumni	60
5.2 The Tasks and Roles Designated to the International Alumni	62
1) The Case-Study HEIs' Unique Approaches	64
The International Alumni Operations of HEI Alfa	65
The International Alumni Operations of HEI Beta	69
Summary of the Tasks and Roles Designated to the International Alumni	72
2) The Theoretical Framework and the Findings	76
The Role of Customer	77
The Role of Stakeholder	79
The Role of Partner	81
5.3 Summary of the Results	84
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	88
6.1 Outcomes of the Research	90
6.2 Assessment of the Reliability and Validity of the Research	94
6.3 Further Research Topics	94
6.4 Afterword	95
TABLES AND FIGURES	97
REFERENCES	98
APPENDIXES	106
Classification of Prior Research Based on Theme and Topic	106
Semi-Structured Interview Frame	109

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background and Importance of the Research

The Finnish higher education institutions (hereafter referred as HEIs) are undergoing a new phase of internationalisation initiated by the Ministry of Education and Culture's (2009) Strategy for the Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions in Finland 2009-2015 (hereafter referred as the Ministerial Strategy). It draws focus to the global megatrends affecting higher education (hereafter referred as HE), such as massification and commercialisation of HE, and offers concrete steps to tackle the challenges regarding internationalisation of the Finnish HEIs. One of the challenges described in the Ministerial Strategy is education export – an example of the commercialisation and globalisation of HE that the Finnish HEIs are focusing after changes in legislation that enabled tuition fees for non-EU/ETA-area students and removed obstacles for education export outside Finland.

“In many of the emerging economies of Asia, the Middle East and Latin America, domestic supply is not sufficient to meet the increasing demand of higher education. Our good reputation linked with the PISA survey and success in other comparison has gone largely unexploited.”

Ministry of Education and Culture, (2009, pp. 39-40).

The Ministerial Strategy's perspective on internationalisation is leaning towards commercialisation of education and it regards education export as a potential business area for the Finnish HEIs. The Ministerial Strategy is quite clear on what is the strategic level goal given by the Ministry of Education and Culture to the Finnish HEIs.

“The aim is that the export of competence and education by higher education institutions becomes a nationally significant export product and part of Finnish export promotion.”

Ministry of Education and Culture, (2009, p. 40).

However, the Ministerial Strategy does more than gives instructions to the HEIs – it presents measures that should be taken during the strategic term. Among the different measures proposed in the strategy, one specific measure drew the attention of the author of this research. The Ministerial Strategy suggests that the Finnish HEIs could increase international visibility and boost education export by utilising the numerous international alumni of the Finnish HEIs.

“14. The higher education institutions, CIMO and the Academy of Finland will invest in developing the alumni activities of students, teachers and researchers with foreign backgrounds. Experts familiar with Finland will be utilised in increasing the visibility of Finnish higher education institutions. The alumni activities also offer an informative and influential channel to Finnish researchers and experts living abroad.”

Ministry of Education and Culture, (2009, p. 48).

In the eyes of the Ministry of Education and Culture, international alumni are potential ambassadors of Finland and Finnish education that could form a global network useful in many ways for the Finnish HEIs. However, there is a long path from a strategic goal to execution and reality – did this strategic measure come into fruition in the Finnish HEIs?

Recently, the Ministry of Education and Culture initiated a plan to send ambassadors of education and research around the world to boost the internationalisation of Finnish education. The purpose of the ambassador network is to attract international experts to Finland and boost education export. The ambassador network formed by the Ministry will consist of about 10 specialists working around the world under the Team Finland umbrella. (Helsingin Sanomat, 8.1.2018) Based on these recent news, it is evident that the topic of this research is both current and relevant. The efforts made by the Ministry of Education and Culture underlines the national relevance of the topic of this research. It shows that both on strategic and practical level, the Ministry of Education and Culture is focused in advancing education export and the internationalisation process of the Finnish HEIs. And it begs to ask the Finnish HEIs, what have they been up to since the publishing of the Ministerial Strategy and do they have their own education export ambassadors – the international alumni – working towards the internationalisation of Finnish education and the promotion of education export.

The explicit will of the Ministry of Education and Culture is known through the Ministerial Strategy and the recent news regarding the ambassadors of education and research, but the response of the Finnish HEIs is unknown to us. It is the opinion of the author, that this is a topic worth studying, as it can offer vital information on the implementation of the Ministerial Strategy in HEIs as well as current information regarding the development of the HEIs' alumni networks and the tasks and roles designated to international alumni.

This is also a topic that has not been studied before, even though other alumni related research has been conducted both in Finland and abroad. There is a gap in academic research

regarding the role of the international alumni in HEIs, which makes this research both important and ground breaking (see 4.3 Literature review) and offers the author an interesting topic to work with. Furthermore, the Finnish HEIs have thousands of international alumni that can have a positive or a negative outcome in many endeavours that the HEIs partake. They should not be ignored and every step taken towards understanding the dynamics in play between the HEIs and their international alumni are important.

The New Public Management (hereafter referred to as NPM) and New Public Governance (hereafter referred to as NPG) models (Osborne, 2006) form the theoretical framework of this research. From a purely academic perspective, education export and commercialisation of HE are topics that fit the theoretical framework of this research well. However, applying the NPG model to HE and alumni research is a novel approach and demands significant efforts from the author due to the limitations of prior research in the same field. NPG model has not been utilised in HE research often and never in research focused on international alumni.

The author will make an honest attempt to break ground with a research topic that has not been studied in Finland before utilising a theoretical frame that is not typical in HE research. This research is an exploratory case-study (Yin, 2003, 2011) focused in two Finnish HEIs where the author conducted semi-structured interviews for informants consisting of faculty members working with education export and international alumni. It is the hope of the author that the outcome of this research will form a base for additional research in the same field and that the results of this research can be utilised both by the academics and faculty members of HEIs as well as politicians and officials trying to develop HE.

1.2 Purpose of the Research and Research Question

The purpose of this research is to reveal more about the complex relationship of the international alumni and the Finnish HEIs. This is done by identifying what tasks and roles are designated to the international alumni by the Finnish HEIs in general and specifically regarding education export. As the Ministerial policy was to utilise the international alumni in the education export efforts of the Finnish HEIs, it is relevant to understand more about the relationship the institutions and alumni share and the tasks that the international alumni are doing for the Finnish HEIs.

The author chose the NPM and NPG models as the theoretical framework of the research. NPM has been used in HE research relatively widely, unlike the NPG model that is a newer and less familiar model outside the public-sector research field. The author attempts to identify and categorise the tasks and roles of the international alumni and identify features that fit the NPM and/or NPG models.

According to Osborne (2006), the theoretical roots of the NPG model lie in organisational sociology and network theories. He suggests that governance mechanism and relationship to external organisational partners differ from preceding theories, such as NPM and Public Administration (hereafter referred as PA), rather drastically. The trust-based approach and interdependency of agents provide analytical tools to consider the relationship of the international alumni and HEIs:

“An emphasis on the design and evaluation of enduring inter-organisational relationship, where trust, relational capital and relational contracts act as the core governance mechanisms”
Bovaird (2006), Teicher et al. (2006) quoted by Osborne (2006).

Both national and international alumni activities and networks are in early developmental stages in most Finnish HEIs and the potential the alumni have is largely untapped (Paakkulainen, 2004; Kauppinen, 2009; Aarva & Alijärvi, 2012). The previous research is largely focused on founding and maintaining alumni networks as well as alumni as a source of direct funding for HEIs (McDearmon, 2013; Abendroth, 2015; Baron, 2015; Toivanen, 2015).

The complex nature of HEIs (Clark 1983; Birnbaum 1988) begs this research to take a more ambitious perspective and develop the previous HE alumni research further. As it is understood that HEIs are complex of nature, it can be assumed that the relationship of alumni and the alma mater can have features of this complexity.

The focus of the research will be in the Finnish HEIs and this will ultimately classify this research as national of nature. However, this research contributes to other HEIs in similar surroundings, such as the Nordic Countries.

The research question for this research is:

What kind of tasks and roles the case-study HEIs designate to the international alumni in general and regarding education export, and why?

The research is conducted as an explorative case-study (Yin, 2003) conducted in two Finnish HEIs and the chosen perspective is that of the faculty members of the case-study HEIs. The research question is the foundation of the narrative of this research and ties the theoretical frame, the NPM and NPG models, to it through education export. It is the assumption of the author, that any identifiable features of the theoretical models can best be seen by observing education export done by the case-study HEIs. As the research questions are viewed from the perspective of the faculty of HEI working with alumni and education export, the aim is to acquire rich and specific data of the research phenomenon and describe the case in detail. The research focuses in the Finnish HE sector and is executed as a case study. The research material is collected through a series of semi-structured interviews conducted in two case-study HEIs.

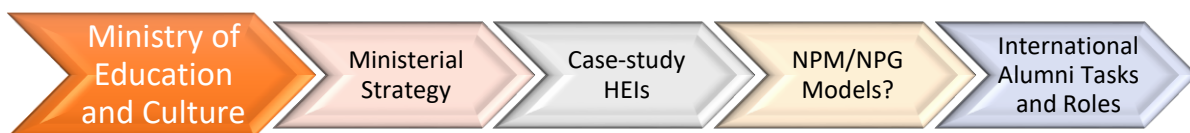


Figure 1. Governance path. (Aku Aarva, 2017)

1.3 Researcher's Position

The research process itself, advanced via semi-structured interviews, is quite demanding for the author as researcher, as it brings him face to face with the informants, people working in various positions in HEIs. It is possible, that the author's personal and professional experiences have an effect in this research and as such it is important to identify and willingly lay them out in the open for others to evaluate.

The topic of alumni and HE is not new to the author. He has previously conducted a quantitative research regarding the possible and feasible structures of international alumni networks and in this previous research, he conducted a quantitative survey aimed for the international students of JAMK University of Applied Sciences. In a way, this research is a continuation of that previous research, at least in spirit and on a personal level.

The author is an active alumnus of three Finnish HEIs and their student communities, like the student unions. The author has also worked in HE administration and in student unions and,

in these roles, he has taken part in various administrative tasks and work groups as well as in different decision-making positions.

The author also has personal views regarding education export and the role international alumni could, and perhaps should, have regarding it and HEIs in general. These personal views are identified and pushed aside. The author views international alumni as a high-value stakeholder group that has its potential almost completely left untapped by the HEIs in Finland.

Identifying and openly discussing the possible biases of the author helps him conduct this research, but also enables the readers to be critical where need be. The author conducts this research with high research ethics.

1.4 Research Structure

This research paper consists of six chapters. The introduction chapter portrays the research topic, core concepts and research questions and gives an overview of the research phenomenon. The second chapter presents previous research done on HE alumni, alumni activities and alumni network structures. These primarily international academic publications present a general idea of the past and current research trends regarding alumni activities in HE.

The third chapter is about the theoretical frame of the research: the NPM and NPG models. The chapter includes a short revision to the development of the models. In addition, the author ties the models to the research phenomenon. In this chapter, the author transfers the NPG model from the more traditional governmental and municipal public administration field and transfers it to the HE administration and governance field. In the beginning of the chapter, the author inspects the history of the models, then the NPM and NPG models as concepts and growing models and finally HE research through the models. The emphasis of this chapter is to show that the chosen theoretical frames form a complex and multipurpose concept that have elements within them that correspond to the research topic of this research.

After theory comes the chosen methodology. The fourth chapter begins with an introduction to qualitative research approach that has been described as an umbrella for various research methods (Gubrium, 1988). The numerous research methods under the qualitative approach has been listed first by Tesch (1992) and again by Hirsjärvi et al. (2014) and consists of some 43 different methodological possibilities. The fourth chapter continues with explaining the reasoning behind the chosen explorative case-study method, and how it will be applied in this

research. Finally, the practical steps of the research will be introduced together with the chosen analysis methods.

The fifth chapter is the analysis chapter that consists of analysis of the research material and the conclusions drawn from them. The research results will be divided into three themes based on the subsequent research questions. These themes will be analysed through the material produced in the semi-structured interviews of the academic and professional staff of the case-study HEIs. This chapter also introduces the conclusions drawn regarding the main research question, a thorough reliability analysis and a discussion part where the possible further research topics are evaluated.

1.5 Core Concepts

As there is limited amount of previous research of the topic in question and the field of education export is relatively new, it is important to define the core concepts for the reader. The definitions used here are gathered from various sources with the simple aim of enabling the reader to understand the terms in the context of this research.

Education export

As a concept, education export is one of the more difficult ones to define. It is a rather new term and as such it does not have a generally agreed definition. Tuition fees for foreign students, branch offices in foreign countries, paid degree programmes, individual courses and modules etc. can all be bundled under the concept of education export. Globalisation and internationalisation are often used as umbrella concepts or parallel concepts for education export. (Sidhu & Dall’Alba, 2012; Marginson, 2011; Chowdhury, 2011)

However, the definition used in this research comes from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture. It states in its education export report (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010) that education export refers to all export related to education, including education as service produced in Finland for international customers (students, companies, partners, nations etc.). The Ministerial report defines export as a business where the customer is foreign but the service does not have to take place outside Finland. International export of education is part of the World Trade Organization WTO’s General Agreement on Trade of Service GATS and a politically difficult matter.

The Ministerial report is a political document and might not follow all the academic principles. It is recognised that this definition might not be in line with the changing and developing views of the academic community, but for the purposes of this research, the definition is valid and generally in line with the wider definitions for education export.

Relationship

It is the opinion of the author, that both in NPM and NPG one of the key elements is the relationship between the actors – in this case the case-study HEIs' and the international alumni. To observe this relationship by studying what kind of tasks and roles the case-study HEIs designate to the international alumni, it is necessary to understand more about the concept itself: what does relationship mean in the context of this research?

The term relationship is difficult to define and conceptualise. It is a rather common concept that is used and, perhaps, overused often, and it has multiple meanings. It was surprisingly challenging to locate a working definition that would capture all the complexities of the concept and all its nuances. Hence, the author approached the term from different angles and conceptualised the term for the purposes of this research.

A relationship can be formed between two or more people and this relationship may vary both in duration and intensity. This relationship may be formed due to love, solidarity, business interaction or some other form of social commitment, but they are generally called interpersonal relationships. The context of these various forms of relationships are versatile: marriage, friendship, work, neighbourhoods, organisations and so forth. They are often regulated by laws, social customs, contracts or other forms of agreements and form the backbone of the modern society. (Miller, 2014, pp. 535-554)

However, Miller (2014, pp. 535-554) is referring only to social relationships – not relationships formed between institutions or organisations and individuals or groups. The relationship between the case-study HEIs and the international alumni is beyond that of a social relationship between individuals or groups. The relationship between the case-study HEIs and international alumni is a relationship between an institution and individuals or groups.

Osborne (2006) argues that in NPM the relationship between the organisation and the external partners is managerial and in NPG it is based on trust or relational contracts. He approaches the term relationship from an administrative perspective – the term relationship refers to governance, even if he does not directly conceptualise the term.

In this research, the term relationship refers to the complex contracts and administrative solutions typical for NPM and NPG models and formed between the case-study HEIs and the international alumni: international alumni as customers, stakeholders or partners.

Customer

Blythe (2008) and Frain (1999) argue that customer is a term used in sales and typically refers to the recipient of goods, services, products or ideas from suppliers. The term seems simply enough and rather straight-forward, but it can be deceiving.

Defining a customer in education export is tricky. The HEIs provide services in the form of education or facilities, but the end user is not necessarily the one who pays the bill. In fact, it is rather typical that companies or foreign HEIs place orders and the end users are employees or students. Who is the customer in these cases?

According to Blythe (2008, p. 18) and Kansal & Rao (2006, p. 61) a customer purchases the goods and a consumer uses them. In the context of this research, in education export, this applies as well. There might be multiple intermediates between the producer and the end-user. A customer can refer to any party purchasing education from HEIs, but it can also refer to the international alumni.

Partnership

The term partnership contains within it a large variety of concepts and describes distinct types of relationships – and in this research, it is regarded as a sub-category to the term relationship. The term itself is widely used in business, politics and education as well as to describe, among other things, contracts between private individuals.

Osborne (2006, p. 128) refers to OECD (1990:18) with a definition to the term partnership:

“Systems of formalised co-operations, grounded in legally binding arrangements or informal understandings, co-operative working relationships, and mutually adopted plans among a number of institutions. They involve agreements on policy and programme objectives and the sharing of responsibility, resources and benefits over a specified period of time.”

Harding (1990, p. 110) is not settled with simply defining the term partnership, but rather defines the term private-public partnership:

“Any action which relies on the agreement of actors in the public and private sectors and which also contributes in some way to improving the urban economy and the quality of life.”

Osborne (2006, p. 129) argues that it is important to understand the different organisational levels (strategic, project) as well as the entities committing to the partnership. HE refers to Snape and Stewart (1996) who distinguished three ideal-typical forms of partnerships: facilitating partnerships, coordinating partnerships and implementing partnerships. These differences should be kept in mind as they are relevant to the partnerships possibly formed between the case-study HEIs and the international alumni.

Finally, Hutchinson and Campbell (1998, p. 9) combine a set of features regarding partnerships that bring together the term and helps in conceptualising it: risk, resource and skill sharing; aiming for mutual benefit and synergy; common aims and strategy; and multilevel interest in cooperation.

In the context of this research, partnership refers to the informal or binding arrangements between the case-study HEIs and the international alumni and the tasks and roles designated by the case-study HEIs and the possible compensation or other form of benefits gained by the international alumni. Partnership is a form of cooperation that the author sees as typical for the NPG model that emphasises networking. In this sense, the case-study HEIs have a coordination role whereas the international alumni operate independently but within the frame given by the case-study HEIs. In this form of partnership, the international alumni are a part of the HEI network.

Stakeholder

Freeman (1983, pp. 88-106) can be named the father of the concept of stakeholder. It is a concept that is used in various research fields and business life, but more recently also in administrative sciences and management. Freeman identified that a corporate stakeholder can affect or be affected of the actions of the corporation – they have something at stake.

More recently, the term stakeholder has become familiar also in the field of management. According to Bourne (2007), a stakeholder is a person or an organisation that has a real interest in a specific project, group or organisation. Today, the concept covers everyone with an interest in what a specific operative is doing.

In this research, international alumni are stakeholders and it is also an approach that is, in the opinion of the author, a typical setting from the perspective of the theoretical frame of this research. Both in NPM and NPG models, stakeholders are relevant actors for any organisation trying to fulfil its purpose. Stakeholders have something at stake – international alumni have something at stake with the HEIs.

Internationalisation

The concept of *internationalisation* (or internationalization) is somewhat complex and has been defined by many academics through many perspectives (Knight, 2015; McDougall, 2000; Kosmützky and Nokkala, 2014.). For this research, it is natural to perceive the concept through the perspective of HE introduced by Jane Knight (2015).

According to Knight (2015), internationalisation as a term has seen its own share of debate and has been defined in multiple ways over the centuries. In the context of HE, the term has been utilized since the early 1980s and it was preceded by the term *international education*. Knight (2015) divides the term into three main interpretations that are 1) international activities such as academic mobility for students and teachers, 2) education export, and 3) international, intercultural or global approach to pedagogy. Knight also remarks that internationalisation and globalisation is often confused.

To define the concept of internationalisation, Knight (2015) proposes the following definition:

“Internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education.”

This definition is, in the opinion of the author of this research, in unison with the approach taken by the Ministerial report and the requirements of the research.

Alumnus and alumni

The Harvard University Website (accessed 21.01.2018) defines an alumnus as an individual who has received a degree from any school at Harvard University or Radcliffe College, including honorary degrees. Most academics seem to follow this straightforward line of thinking as the term has not been conceptualised in any of the research conducted regarding HE alumni.

In this research, the word alumni will be used to refer to both male and female alumni even though the strict view is that alumni refers to a group of males. However, using the word

alumni as a general term referring to all genders and both plural and single forms is quite typical today.

As the context of this research is global or in the very least international, it is necessary to define and separate the idea of alumni in general and alumni in the global or international context. The logical path for this is to compare the widely-used term international student (the OECD Innovation Strategy, 2010) and international alumni with each other. The first one refers to a student in a HEI that is in a country that is not the home country of the student. Therefore, the term international alumni refer to a graduated international student. The same path of thinking could be expanded to cover faculty members as well.

It must be noted that in some countries, like Australia or Japan, the term can be expanded to cover students outside tertiary education as well (International Student Mobility 2007). This terminological variation should be kept in mind while addressing international literature and research.

In addition, Mira Network (2004) raises a question about the general concept of *alumni* or *alumni networks* in Finland. The definitions are at best unfamiliar or even unclear to most major parties in the HEI surroundings. That is why most of the platforms designed for alumni start with a definition of the term – it must be explained to the public and to the alumni as well.

To clarify the term for the purposes of this research, the author discussed the term with all the informants interviewed for this research. The common view they shared was that alumni are former degree students that have graduated from the HEI in question.

Finally, the Merriam-Webster online dictionary alongside with multiple other dictionaries define *alumnus* (plural *alumni*):

“1) as a person who has attended or has graduated from a particular school, college or university and 2) a person who is a former member, employee, contributor or inmate.”

According to the dictionary, the word *alumnus* comes from Latin and refers to foster son or pupil and the first known use was dated to 1645. This rather simple definition is enough to understand the term, but it is still necessary to address the context it has in this research.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH PHENOMENON

To comprehensively capture the role and relationship of alumni and HE, the author of this research went through dozens of national and international studies related to alumni in HE and classified them based on topic and theme. To maintain high quality of the literature review, the following limitations were set for the searches conducted and material found: articles must be peer reviewed, thesis and other research documents must be full-text and published through a recognized university with full sources attached, timeframe was set to 2000-2016 with only a few exceptions made in some background data sources and languages used in all publications were either Finnish or English. The chosen timeframe reflects the relationship of the research to the theoretical background of the NPG model and its predecessor NPM that is utilized in HEI's management. No geographical limitations were made, but due to other limitations like the language, most of the relevant literature found originates from Finland or English-speaking countries like the USA or Great Britain.

The searches were done using the following electronic databases: Eric (ProQuest), Andor, Emerald, Education Research Complete (EBSCOhost) and the search engine Google Scholar. Helsinki, Jyväskylä, Turku and Tampere Universities library databases and library services were used to search for thesis and reports as well as the database Theseus for the thesis of the Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences. Finally, online sources such as university websites, alumni websites and online journals were used to find sources and as sources. The searches produced thousands of hits, but the ones chosen were picked based on relevance of their abstracts and/or topics.

Regarding entries used in the searches, simply using the entries "international alumni OR alumni AND higher education OR university" produced around ten thousand hits in each database and it could be seen that there was too much variation with the topics. Narrowing the entries finally gave a more relevant outcome and the entries used to conduct the literature review search were such as "higher education OR university AND alumni AND relations" and "international alumni AND NPM OR NPG" etc.

The amount of data found related to alumni in HE and international alumni in HE was massive and it is possible that some relevant articles or other research documents were missed during the literature review. It is also possible, that the entries used were not comprehensive and

caused failure in obtaining the correct source material – however this possibility is highly reduced by the combination of multiple different entry patterns and try-and-fail-and-try again - method. It is the view of the author, that this literature review is wide enough to cover the research done related to alumni and international alumni in HE from the past few decades and as such is a strong background for this research.

2.1 Alumni Research

The concept of alumni in HE has been vastly studied internationally, but nationally it has not been a hugely popular research topic. It is also noteworthy, that the topic of alumni in HE has only been empirically observed from a few different angles, namely networking and fundraising. There is also a geographical or cultural difference that was evident from the literature review – in the English-speaking world (Great Britain, USA, Australia etc.) the research is highly focused on alumni fundraising but in Finland (and the Nordic Countries) the focus is more in building alumni networks, networking and the usability of alumni in general.

For example, a report by Mira Network (2004) titled *Alumni Activities in Finland in Autumn 2004 – A situational report on alumni activities in the Finnish Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences* summarises the alumni culture in Europe and especially in the Nordic Countries as “first friends – then fundraising” meaning that the priority is to build a relationship between the HEIs and alumni and perhaps in later stages initiate fundraising processes. This is also evident in the report by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2016) titled *Impact evaluation of the Universities Act reform*. In the report, the Ministry complements universities for developing alumni activities and networks, but also states that the development has not resulted in increased alumni funding or a cultural shift. This cultural or geographical difference should be considered in this research. Another interesting finding of the literature review is, that the research in Finland is focused on students or alumni and in the English-speaking world it is focused on alumni or HEI staff.

Finnish Literature

Mira Network’s report (2004) portrays an overall picture about the development of alumni activities in the Finnish HEIs. Obviously, the situation has developed since 2004, but informed estimations can be made based on the situation a little over a decade ago. The report also states that a clear majority of HEIs that did not have any alumni activities in 2004 were planning or in the process of developing alumni activities.

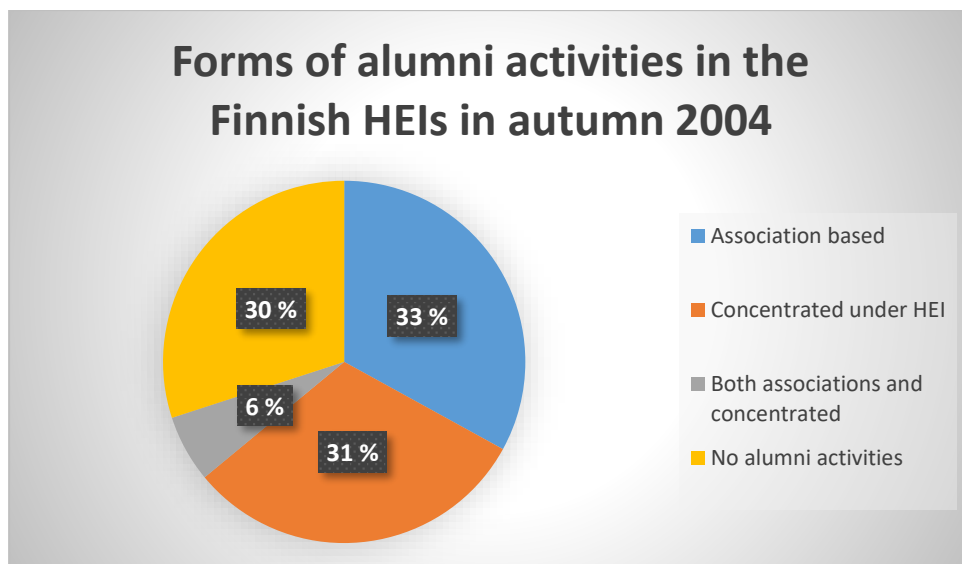


Figure 2. Forms of alumni activities in Finland. (Mira Network, 2004, p. 15).

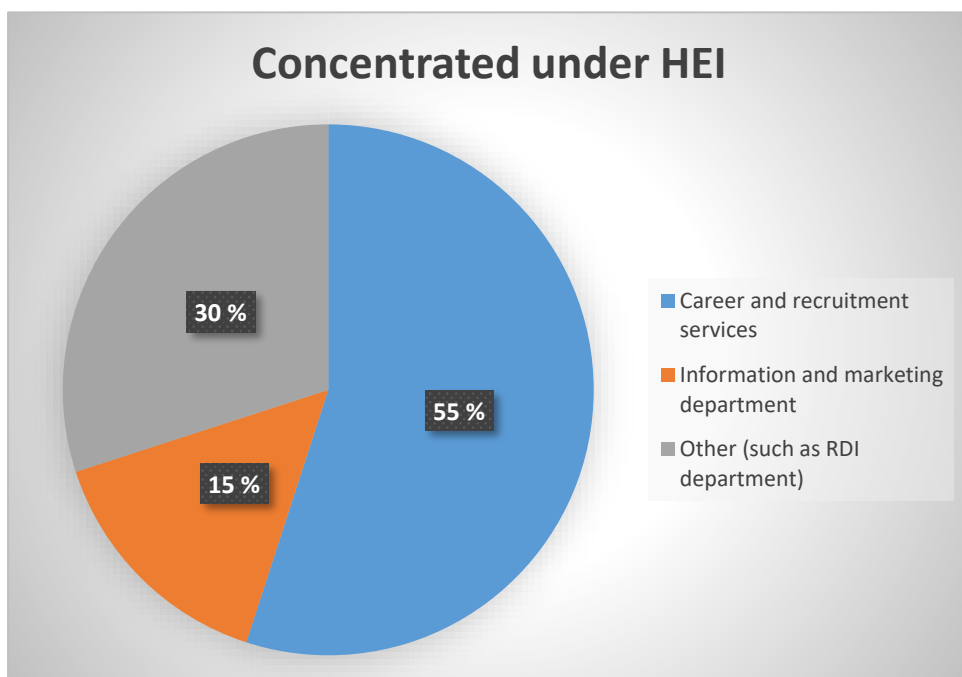


Figure 3. Alumni activities in Finland in Autumn 2004. (Mira Networks, 2004, p. 15).

The report brings up globalising education markets and how globalisation as a megatrend is affecting education in Finland. In the past, universities in Finland were mainly competing for the best students and funding. Already in 2004, there was increasing competition between universities and universities of applied sciences nationally, but also international competition against foreign HEIs for both Finnish students and international students (degree, exchange). (Mira Network, 2004, pp. 16-24)

The most interesting findings of the report, regarding this research, are related to the outlining motivations of HEIs to start, maintain and develop alumni networks and activities. According to the report, the increasing competition and globalisation of the education market are forcing the HEIs to view alumni as potential future customers and education ambassadors that have the potential to bring in new students through advertisement. In addition, alumni are a way to execute “the third task” of HEIs: corporate relations and social interaction and development.

Aside from the Mira Network report, clear majority of research regarding alumni, alumni networks or alumni activities in HEIs seem to be typically focused on creating and improving alumni networks and operations within a certain HEI or department or degree programme within a HEI (Aarva & Alijärvi 2012, Eskola 2012, Ahlfors & Portin 2013.). For example, Eskola (2012) conducted a case-study focused in developing the faculty of culture alumni network and was conducted as a quantitative survey.

The challenge with the common case-study -approach comes with generalizability. The studies conducted in specific HEIs makes it difficult to draw comprehensive conclusions of the overall situation in Finland. It seems that many Finnish HEIs have chosen to order their own studies regarding alumni operations and networks, but relatively few studies focus on the bigger picture, for example the national situation regarding alumni in Finnish HEIs.

Case studies are not the only type of alumni research found in Finland. As mentioned earlier in this research, the Ministerial Strategy can be assumed to have had an effect in the behaviour of the HEIs in Finland. Aside from one visible outcome, the multiple studies done during this period, other forms of publications can be found regarding this topic.

One example of alternative approach is presented by Kauppinen (2009), who conducted vast qualitative interviews and gathered extensive data for a report that was produced as background material for the strategy renewal of Aalto University and it has not been published as an article. However, it includes some very interesting data and an approach that is difficult to find in other sources in Finland: alumni as source of funding and administrative staff as source of information.

Kauppinen (2009) argues that one of the central challenges in developing HEIs alumni activities is that the concept itself is unclear. This is evident also from the multiple studies done in HEIs regarding the structures and operations of alumni networks.

"In the discussions with HEIs alumni coordinators it became evident, that the central challenges in the development of alumni operations is the lack of understanding of the concept and activities in general."

Kauppinen, 2009. Translated by Aku Aarva, 6.1.2017

The suggested twelve steps that Aalto University should take regarding their alumni operations, have very little, if anything, to do with internationalization and education export. Alumni are not seen as a tool for Aalto University from this perspective, even though in one of the case examples the idea of International Ambassadors was described in detail.

In the end, it must be recognized that the research done in Finland regarding alumni in general does not have a long history and is currently still focused largely on building alumni networks. Fundraising is something many HEIs are thinking about, but currently this is not a viable source of income for the institutions. Furthermore, international alumni have only been covered in a handful of publications and the perspective of internationalization and education export was not visible.

International Literature

In the English-speaking countries, alumni are more often seen as sources of income and prestige for the universities. This is especially typical in North America and the United Kingdom as described by McDearmon (2013). He lists typical research topics related to university or college alumni and finds that they are mostly related to understanding what drives the alumni to be charitable towards the institutions.

McDearmon (2013) argues there are several elements singled out that affect this behaviour: age, socio-economical level, happiness with the studying period and post-graduation activities (McDearmon, 2013 pp. 284-285). The same results follow in much of the literature provided in this review and as such, the author of this paper can only concur with McDearmon's findings.

The conclusion on research done regarding alumni as donors for their alma mater are twofold. On the other hand, Pumerantz (2005) and McDearmon (2013) argue that a student grows into an alumnus that wants to support the institution only if the student was happy while studying and created a bond to the institution. However, Baron (2015) and Stephenson and Yerger (2014) argue that focus must be on communication and brand recognition instead.

It is difficult to see if fundraising is a focus point in research because it keeps coming up in the results or because it is set in the focus by HEIs and researches themselves. It can also be argued, that the long history these countries and institutions have regarding alumni operations has taken them further from merely focusing on alumni networks and how to build them (compared to Finland for example). The comparison between Finland and for example the United States is drastic – in Finland the focus is mainly on networks and operations and in the USA, the focus is on understanding what motivates alumni to act as donors.

It is also interesting, that the motives and behaviour of alumni is again in focus in UK and USA and this might have something to do with the decreasing number and total value of donations received from alumni in the recent decade. Has there been some policy changes, like tuition fees or changes in the appreciation of HE diploma, that has caused the relationship between HEIs and alumni to fail?

All in all, the research is highly focused on behaviouristic tendencies of the alumni and the motivational tools the HEIs have in their use. There was no literature focused in alumni, HEIs and New Public Management or Governance that could be found and it seems that the topic has not been approached from the perspectives of structure, hierarchy and tasks, roles and relationships before.

2.2 Conclusions of the Review

First, it must be stated that after extensive searches that included online databases, the search engine Google Scholar and visits to multiple university and public libraries, there were no relevant articles and other publications regarding the relationship of alumni and HEIs conducted from the perspective of the NPG model. Furthermore, there was a lack of research regarding previous research related to the hierarchical relationships of policy makers (ministry of education), HEIs and their stakeholders (the alumni). Even though there is a lot of research available that can be perceived as trying to approach alumni relations from stakeholder or partner management perspective, they fail to go beyond case studies regarding the tools used to communicate and operate with the alumni within universities.

It can be concluded, that the topic of this research is a novel approach and has potential to provide significant and indebt insight to the discussion about the role of the alumni of HEI's.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Public Administration

Osborne (2010) argues that the development of public administration and governance can be divided into roughly three significant and overlapping models and phases. These models and phases are Public Administration (PA), NPM and NPG. Osborne describes the development of PA from the late 19th century to the early 20th century towards NPM in the early 1970's and finally the NPG model in the beginning of the new millennia as an inevitable path of development that is still ongoing.

PA is, according to Hood (1991) as quoted by Osborne (2010), a sort of archetype of the modern administration models and as such includes key elements such as *the rule of law*, a central rule of bureaucracy in making and implementing policy, a commitment to incremental budgeting etc. It reached its climax during in the decades following the 2nd World War together with the idea of the welfare state. According to Osborne, in the late 70's and early 80's many academic critics (Dunleavy, 1985; Mischra, 1984; Rhodes, 1996) argued that PA was entering a terminal phase and making way for NPM.

3.2 New Public Administration and New Public Governance Research Trends

According to Osborne (2010) NPM started spreading in the early 70's and introduced a new discourse of public policy implementation and public services delivery. It became particularly popular in the OECD countries and introduced managerial techniques to the public sector. According to Osborne, the most extreme forms of NPM implementation assumed that any managerial technique introduced to the public sector would create improvements. Osborne summarizes the key elements of NPM as an attention to lessons from private-sector management, a focus on entrepreneurial leadership within public service organizations, an emphasis on inputs and output control and evaluation, the disaggregation of public services to their most basic units and a focus on their cost management etc.

Pollitt and Bouckaert (2011, pp. 9-11) argue that NPM is the most commonly utilised administrative model in the renewal of public administration and the golden age of the expansion took place in the 80's and 90's in the USA and Great Britain – during the Thatcher – Reagan era. Even though it has spread far, it is not without contest or critique.

The development of NPM was influenced by managerialism and ideas like competitiveness, transparency and discretion and a dislike towards bureaucracy and employee position in public administration. NPM supporters regarded bureaucracy as self-feeding and ever expanding due to the public-sector funding mechanisms and budgeting and, in essence, questioned the position of public administration as the promoter of the common good. The NPM model contains the idea that the public sector should be narrow and leave room for the private market actors and people's right to choose. Public service production has a stronger focus on customers and customer orientation, thanks to the NPM model. (Pierson, 2007, pp. 45-49; Lähdesmäki, 2003, pp. 40-55.)

The NPM model is beneficial to the public sector and has increased the level of cost-effectiveness and brought new tools, such as quality systems, to public administration. In Finland, it was also a key model in the fight against the depression and budgetary crisis of the 1990's. (Lähdesmäki, 2003, pp. 228-240.)

However, many academics (Osborne, 2010; Ferlie et al. 1996) claim that NPM is not a unified phenomenon or paradigm, but a cluster of several. The critics continue that NPM has a rather

limited geographical reach and as such is not over encompassing like PA and even in its dominant areas high geographical variation exists. This, for the critics, makes NPM just a sub school of PA and the benefits of its application at best partial and contested (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) and a disaster waiting to happen (Hood and Jackson, 1991). The most significant critique, according to Osborne (2010), was given by Metcalfe and Richards (1991) as they charged NPM as the application of outdated managerial techniques of the private sector.

Majority of the NPM model related research is focused around public sector reforms in the past twenty or thirty years, but the recent literature seems to be focused on other aspects than simply the NPM model. New models have taken the living space of the NPM model that some deem obsolete or dead. (De Vries & Nemec, 2013, pp. 10-13.) One must ask, if PA is still regarded as an umbrella for most of the other theories and NPM is receiving quite intense critique, what can be expected of Osborne's NPG model?

The NPG model is a controversial administrative model. For example, Torfing and Triantafillou (2013) argue that even though the NPG model shows promise, it is a conceptually underdeveloped empirical model that still needs development. Even further, many academics argue that the whole concept of public administration and governance is eluding (Rhodes, 2007; Kjaer, 2004) due to the variation of both the goals, operators and levels of administration.

However, Osborne (2006; 2010) argues that as both PA and NPM have in the past repeatedly failed to capture the complexity of public service design, delivery and management, there is room for a more comprehensive model - a theory that would bind together the complex varieties of public policy implementation and service delivery. Osborne wants "*to move beyond the sterile dichotomy of administration versus management*" in a sort of freefall of ideas, one of which is the NPG model.

Osborne (2006) also argues that the NPG's paradigm is strong enough to be used in the research and practice of Public Administration and Management (PAM) as it combines the strengths of both PA and NPM and addresses the plurality of public service produces and public service organisations (PSOs).

Paradigm / Key elements	Theoretical roots	Nature of the state	Focus	Emphasis	Relationship to external (non-public) organisational partners	Governance mechanism	Value base
PA	Political sciences and public policy	Unitary	The policy system	Policy implementation	Potential elements of the policy system	Hierarchy	Public sector ethos
NPM	Rational /public choice theory and management studies	Dis-aggregation	Intra-organisational management	Service inputs and outputs	Independent contractors within a competitive marketplace	The market and classical or neo-classical contracts	Efficacy of competition and the marketplace
NPG	Organisational sociology and network theory	Plural and pluralist	Inter-organisational governance	Service processes and outcomes	Preferred suppliers, and often inter-dependent agents within ongoing relationships	Trust or relational contract	Neo-corporatist

Table 1. Elements of the NPG, in contrast to PA and the NPM (Osborne, 2006)

The most interesting part of Osborne's (2006) chart for this research is the relationship to external (non-public) organisational partners. The emphasis on relationships between organisations and actors and the theoretical roots of the NPG model in organisational sociology and network theory tie the model both to HE and international alumni.

The NPG model is not the only nor the leading governance and management model trying to explain the complex nature of public administration. In fact, there are several overlapping and in many ways competing theories (in addition to PA and NPM), such as the Digital-Era Governance (DEG) theory (Dunleavy, 2006) and the New Public Service (NPS) theory (Denhardt R & J, 2000).

According to the literature review, it is evident that NPG research is done mainly by European academics and the concept is best known locally in Europe instead of being a globally recognized theory or model. It is also relevant to point out, that much of the research is focused in understanding the concepts of governance in general (Kjaer, 2004; Rhodes 2007) instead of focusing purely on the NPG model.

The NPG model is viewed as one of the new and critically reformative development paths for public administration. The emphasis in NPG research is often on networks, restructuring of political management methods and structural questions. As the NPM model has been focused

on for example the structures of municipalities and improving the efficiency of municipal management and administration, the NPG model brings attention to the relationship between municipalities and other (external) actors. This brings forth the communal nature of municipalities. Alliances with different private, public and third sector actors, opportunities to participate and give feedback on service production and an overall turn towards communal and participatory democracy is a significant difference to the narrow-minded NPM-public administration used to in Finland. (Haveri & Anttiroiko, 2009)

Research related to the new NPG model focus on analysing political discussion and the assumed move from NPM towards NPG. These studies are mainly conducted as comparative analysis or multi-level analysis tracing possible identifiable indicators of the NPG model in public policy making. Wiesel and Modell (2014) argue that the focus was on the variations in the notion of public sector consumerism becoming embedded in the governance practices, the outcome was that there is no visible radical transformation from NPM towards the NPG model. Instead, they found out that the three forms of administration PA, NPM and NPG complement each other, much like Osborne (2010) stated. Similar findings have been presented for example by Hyndman & Liguori (2016).

Research conducted around the NPG model shed light to local phenomenon and a case-study approach is often used to conduct the research. For example, Hakari (2013) argues that the NPG model is the third wave of public policy reforms and as such follows the lines of Osborne (2010) diligently. He claims that the reform in Tampere is in fact following the thinking process of the NPG model, but still carries elements of the bureaucratic PA and the market orientated NPM. There are also a few other studies regarding NPG (Ranta-aho, 2008; Mäkeläinen, 2004; Yliaska, 2014; Karhinen, 2015) that focus on certain sectors (healthcare etc.) of municipalities, but these theses represent only a fraction of the total pool of research available and were not relevant for this research.

A wider perspective is offered by Avramovic (2016) as he brings the discussion outside of municipalities and discusses the shift from *government* to *governance*. He portrays the NPG model as one of the post-NPM traditions movements and not the only one. Avramovic describes quite brilliantly the steering process of governments in five European countries and the granting of autonomy and the performance based indicators used to administer the institutions towards the desired direction.

The conclusion of the overview of the research trends surrounding the NPM and NPG models is that they can't be fully separated from each other nor, in some cases, even PA. The connections between the models are strong and overlapping and many of the researched phenomena portray elements of both NPM and NPG. The assumed influence the models have in HE globally or locally is a topic that should be researched, but that can also be said about almost any kind of research related to the models outside their traditional public-sector focus.

In any case, the author deems it important to utilise both the NPM and NPG models in this research. NPM is a more widely recognized model is also somewhat often used in HE research whereas NPG has not been utilized in HE research often.

3.3 NPM, NPG, Governance and HEIs

The purpose of this research is to reveal more about the complex relationship of the international alumni and the Finnish HEIs. This is done by identifying what tasks and roles are designated to the international alumni by the Finnish HEIs in general and specifically regarding education export.

The theoretical models, NPM and NPG, chosen as the frame of this research were chosen because they both represent to the author the ongoing change of paradigm in public administration and governance. The concept of governance has become increasingly popular since the 1980's as the public sector has reformed and NPM gained a stronger foothold. The author argues that in the same way that a state or a municipality might require external partners, like companies or associations, to fulfil their goals, HEIs might also require the help of external partners, like the international alumni. The globalising world has changed the roles of these institutions from independent actors towards the role of a partner and enabler and they must include stakeholders and partners in decision making and preparation. (Anttiroiko et al., 2007, pp. 160-180).

In Finland, HEIs have autonomy, self-governance and academic freedom (Tirronen & Kottamäki, 2014, p. 71). However, they are not frozen in time and continue to develop alongside the rest of the world and public sector. Theoretical models, like the NPM and NPG models, that have gained a foothold in the public sector and affect public administration and governance both at the state level and in the municipal level, might also be active in the HE sector.

NPM is an established theoretical model also in the HE field and NPG, as a newer but interesting model, might bring value to research regarding HE administration.

The NPM model was chosen as part of the theoretical frame as it is an established and rooted theoretical model that has been extensively studied. The relevance for this research comes from the emphasis of effectiveness, economy, efficiency and ethics or the four E's as Ikola-Norrbacka and Lähdesmäki (2011, pp. 244-272) named them. This emphasis on features inherently typical for the private sector is what makes the NPM model interesting in the HEI and HE research context. Osborne (2006, see table 2.) refers to efficacy of competition and independent contractors within a competitive marketplace as features of NPM and a governance mechanism keen on the market approach and classical or neo-classical contracts between stakeholders. Finally, Hood (1991, 4-5) identified seven doctrinal components of NPM that summarize relatively comprehensively the model.

No.	Doctrine	Meaning	Typical justification
1	<i>"Hands-on professional management"</i> in public sector	Active, visible, discretionary control of organisations from named persons at the top, "free management"	Accountability requires clear assignment of responsibility for action, not diffusion of power
2	<i>Explicit standards and measures of performance</i>	Definition of goals, targets, indicators of success, preferably expressed in quantitative terms, especially for professional services	Accountability requires clear statement of goals; efficiency requires "hard look" at objectives
3	Greater emphasis on output controls	Resource allocation and rewards linked to measured performance; breakup of centralized bureaucracy-wide personnel management	Need to stress results rather than procedures
4	Shift to disaggregation of units in the public sector	Break up of formerly 'monolithic' units. Unbundling of U-form management systems into corporatized units around products, operating on decentralized 'one-line' budgets and dealing with one another on an 'arm's length' basis	Need to create 'manageable' units. separate provision and production interests, gain efficiency advantages of use of contract or franchise arrangements inside as well as outside the public sector
5	Shift to greater competition in public sector	Move to term contracts and public tendering procedures	Rivalry as the key to lower costs and better standards
6	Stress on private sector styles of management practice	Move away from military-style 'public service ethic', greater flexibility in hiring and rewards; greater use of PR techniques	Need to use 'proven' private sector management tools in the public sector
7	Stress on greater discipline and parsimony in resource use	Cutting direct costs, raising labour discipline. resisting union demands. limiting 'compliance costs' to business	Need to check resource demands of public sector and 'do more with less'

Table 2. Doctrinal components of NPM (Hood, 1991, pp. 4-5)

Has NPM affected HE in Finland? Juppo (2011, pp. 2-3) argues that the HE reforms of the past decade were influenced by NPM: goal-oriented public funding models, HEI-fusions, changes in internal and external governance models, increasing competition internally and between institutions and HEIs legal position changing into legal entity. According to Juppo (2011, pp. 54-56), the Finnish HE reforms were managed top-down and initiated in the Ministry of Education. The driving force in the reforms have been political.

Lepistö (2016, pp. 31-47) refers to Kallio (2014, pp. 64-65) who argues that the development of Finnish HE consists of three eras and governance doctrines: 1) the academical-traditional doctrine, that lasted until the 60's; 2) Development doctrine, that lasted until the 80's; and 3) the NPM doctrine, that emphasises performance management and the market oriented HEI. In essence, the Finnish HEIs are tied into a market oriented management and governance model that is visible, for example, through the financial agreements settled between the HEIs and the Ministry of Education. Lepistö argues that the reforms conducted according to the NPM model have aimed to increase the autonomy of the Finnish HEIs, so that they could react independently to the rapidly changing environment and respond to the requirements of their stakeholders, the working life and customers. Another emphasis, especially in Finland, has been a political desire from the Ministry of Education to promote strategic alliances between HEIs, so that their profiles would become clearer and HE units would grow and become more influential.

The effects of the NPM model in HE sector in Finland are evident, but there is debate on whether they are positive. The report conducted by Niinikoski et al. (2012, pp. 59-65) for the Ministry of Education evaluates the effects of the university reform. The report argues that the HEIs are able to react to changing operational environment better, their autonomy has increased, their funding was improved and the HEIs had reformed their governance models. However, according to other academics (Kallio, 2015, pp. 177-180; Patomäki, 2005, p. 83) the reform was politically motivated, pushed forward rapidly and lacked criticism towards the issues of NPM. They claim that managerialism drove to compromises that have caused several issues in the Finnish HEIs due to their top-down approach and emphasis on cost-cutting. Lepistö (2016, p. 36) argues that the NPM model has led to hierarchical governance models that are not suitable for HEIs. The different administrative and managerial levels bump into each

other and different measurement tools and goals cause tension between departments. The same criticism is repeated by Mikkola (2013) and Kuoppala (2005).

Overall, it is evident that the NPM model has been utilised in the Finnish HE sector, but not without issues. It has been a dominant model in the HE sector for a few decades, but might be giving room for newer models, like the NPG model. The author of this research saw it both as interesting and important to utilize a timelier theoretical model alongside the NPM model in hopes of finding something new and relevant related to the research topic.

The NPG model was chosen as the other half of the theoretical frame of this research because of the pluralistic nature of the model and an emphasis on the design and evaluation of enduring inter-organisational relationships, where trust, relational capital and relational contracts act as the core governance mechanisms (Bovaird, 2006; Teicher et al. 2006 quoted by Osborne, 2006). In this research, this enables the author to research the relationship of alumni and the alma mater from the perspective of the NPG model similarly to Osborne and McLaughlin (2002), Hudson (2004) or Huxhan and Vangen (2005).

According to Osborne (2006), the theoretical roots of the NPG model lie in organisational sociology and network theory. He argues that governance mechanism and relationship to external organisational partners differ from NPM and PA rather drastically. The trust-based approach and inter-dependency of agents give space for research conducted on the relationship of the international alumni and HEIs. The NPG model is also used as an umbrella concept, defining the differences between old and new models (Osborne, 2006) and to encompass principles like co-production and participation (Torfing & Triantafillou, 2013). Overall, the NPG model emphasises increased integration, inter-connectedness and inter-organisational networks and can be a reaction to the economic principles and ideas of NPM (Broucker, De Wit and Leisyte, 2015).

HE and HEIs have been the source of inspiration and a research target for many academics over the years. The complex nature of HEIs (Clark 1983; Birnbaum 1988) has made it an abundant source of research topics and this paper is an addition to the long tradition of HE research. Based on the findings of the author, the research on the NPG model is typically focused on public sector municipal or national administration and governance or just generally public administration and governance. Therefore, it must be stated that applying the NPG model to

the relationship between international alumni and HE seems to only be feasible in environments, like Finland, where education is perceived as a public service or is produced or ordered by the public sector. It is the view of the author of this research, that HE in Finland can, at least for now, be seen as a public service and as such HEIs can be seen as public service organisations. This view is challenged as HEIs move towards private service production by developing education export services for customers outside the EU/ETA-countries.

The NPG emphasises institutional and network theory (Osborne, 2010, pp. 6-13) and cooperation between different actors both locally and internationally (Haveri & Anttiroiko, 2009) as HEIs seek strategic advantages in cooperation with each other, companies and the third sector – and the international alumni. This is also, and perhaps most importantly, visible in the Ministerial Strategy as a goal to develop education export by utilising the international alumni networks in the international education market. The idea of communal, participatory and democratic governance style of the NPG model (Haveri and Anttiroiko, 2009) is highly visible in the Ministerial Strategy and binds the model to the main research question.

For the purposes of this research, it has already been established that HE and HEIs fall into the category of PAM and as such have been influenced by paradigms such as PA both in the past and present. It is only feasible to assume that an upcoming paradigm such as the NPG model can have the same affect in HE governance and within the HEIs regarding the alma mater – alumni relationships.

Finally, it is important to understand that both theoretical models used in this research are highly connected to the concept of governance. The concept has been used in academic discussions since the 80's to describe the reforms and updates in public administration. In essence, the shift towards a global and pluralistic world has created challenges that the traditional public administrators are unable to answer alone. Their role has shifted from the traditional independent actors towards the role of partner and enabler. These public-sector operatives, like the HEIs, must cooperate with partners, such as companies, NGO's or, from the perspective of this research, international alumni. The concept can be understood remarkably easily by comparing it to the concept of government. (Anttiroiko & Haveri, 2007, 164-181.)

	Government	Governance
Power dimension	Using public regulatory and coercive power	Developmental and initiative power
Role and main task	Executing collective decisions	Executing collective developmental goals
Task area emphasis	Regulatory role	Developmental role
Organisation principle	Hierarchical	Network
Public sector as an actor	Executer	Coordinator
View on processes	Internal processes of government	External relationships of government
Resource dimension	Administrative organisation's own resources	The resources of the whole community and operational environment
The role of citizen	Subject	Active operator
Relationship to private sector	The subject of regulation	Partner

Table 3. The Comparison Between Government and Governance (Anttiroiko & Haveri, 2007, p. 168).

3.3 Synthesis

HEIs have undergone many reforms in the past decades both nationally in Finland and internationally around the world as a response to the knowledge society, economic crises, increasing competition and shifting demographics (Dobbins, Knill and Vögtle, 2011; Avramovic, 2016). Despite strong hidden political influence by international organisations like the OECD and the Erasmus Mundus Network, the European Union considers HE policy as a national topic. Nevertheless, HE is international or global by nature. In addition, megatrends such as globalisation of education is something that has a strong influence in national decision making and even the European Union has shown signs of interest in steering HE policy in Europe. (Pekkola, Kivistö, Nokkala, 2014)

The Ministry of Education and Culture (2008, 2016) emphasise the connection between the alumni and alma mater in the development of education export. This approach has features typical for both NPM and NPG – on one hand the Ministry of Education and Culture is taking an administrative role, governing the HEIs through these policy documents but on the other hand they are emphasising the relationship between HEIs and alumni, a partnership that is more typical in the NPG model.

The NPM model has been utilised in HE research for years, whereas the NPG model is a novel approach – especially in research conducted with a focus on internal governance solutions of HEIs. However, both the NPM and NPG approach lean away from the traditional HE research that observes HEIs as complex, loosely-coupled and bottom heavy political institutions (see Weick, 1973; Clark, 1983; Baldrige, 1983; Birnbaum, 1988). Therefore, especially the NPG

model, strongly connected to NPM (and PA), should be studied more and perhaps conceptualised better. It is noteworthy to mention, that Osborne (2010) emphasises that he did not introduce the NPG model as a new paradigm for public service delivery and that it might never come one. However, for the purposes of this research and alongside the well-rooted NPM model, the NPG model has proven its adaptability and enables the author to approach the research question of the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2014, pp. 134-136), there are three traditional research strategies:

- 1) experimental research strategy,
- 2) quantitative (survey) research strategy
- 3) and qualitative (case-study) research strategy.

Experimental research strategy measures variables and analyses samples. Quantitative research strategy is focused on samples and are typically executed as surveys. Qualitative case studies aim to gather intensive and specific information on an isolated case or small number of interrelated cases and it aims to describe the phenomenon. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2014, pp. 134-135)

This research is inherently qualitative and certainly a case-study but it also included an exploratory phase prior to the execution of the research. In this phase, the author conducted a separate exploratory work regarding the questions to be asked and conducted a series of trial research interviews to test subjects. This was due to the author being uncertain about what should be asked from the informants as the topic had not been studied before and previous research using the same theoretical frame and methods had not been done about the topic anywhere. However, the author made sure to separate the exploratory phase from the final execution of the research to avoid contamination and to separate author's own intuition and actual research and hypothesis. (Yin, 2011, pp. 28-31).

In this research, the case regards to the two case-study HEIs, their international alumni and the relationship they share as well as the context of education export efforts of two Finnish HEIs. The purpose of this research is to reveal more about the complex relationship of the

international alumni and the Finnish HEIs. This is done by identifying what tasks and roles are designated to the international alumni by the Finnish HEIs in general and specifically regarding education export.

The division between quantitative and qualitative research strategies has been under debate for a long time. In principle, academic research can be qualitative or quantitative by nature or a combination of both sorts called mixed method approach. These two approaches have been classified and categorised by many academics in many ways and there are also those who claim such efforts are feeble at best and do not bring any added value. For these critics, the division between qualitative and quantitative approach is artificial and the cause of much confusion in the academic field. (Hirsjärvi, et al., 2014, pp- 134-140)

Hirsjärvi et al. (2014, pp.160-166) argue, that qualitative and quantitative research approaches are not opposites but instead they are an attempt to define the core questions through which a research strategy can be chosen. Hirsjärvi et al. argue that there is no reason to separate the two approaches and instead they should be viewed as complementary – to be used side by side or to create a path for the research by utilising one approach first and the other based on the results. Even though quantitative research is often seen as numerical research and qualitative as research focused on meanings or phenomenon they are connected and dependant on each other. Numbers are based on concepts that have meanings and meanings can be portrayed as numerical data.

Alasuutari (2012) has similar views regarding the clear and clean separation of qualitative and quantitative approaches. He states that it can be tempting to consider a dualistic approach, but on the other hand it has little to do with reality. All science includes common practices and principles, like search for logic and objectivity, in the sense that academics rely on research data and results instead of their subjective views or value bases. Furthermore, Alasuutari claims that it is possible to separate qualitative and quantitative analysis, but it is pointless as they are often used in the same research and even on the same research material.

Even though the terms are controversial and even somewhat misleading, they are recognised by the academic field. Like Tesch (as quoted by Hirsjärvi et al. 2014) says, any attempts to change them would be as futile as trying to teach a parrot to forget something it has learned.

4.1 Qualitative Research Approach

The author was pulled between the qualitative and quantitative approach, but the exploratory phase and finally the literature review made it clear that a qualitative approach was the better option. It would have been difficult to formulate a survey or a structured interview frame that would have covered all aspects of the topic, as it had not been studied extensively.

Qualitative research approach is chosen instead of quantitative as a response to the research question. The research question, together with a research topic that has not been studied extensively in Finland, require indebt discussions with informants that can offer views from different hierarchical and operational levels of the case-study HEIs. It is likely, that these interviews will raise many new questions and spawn topics for additional research, but that is one of the goals – to open the Pandora’s box regarding the international alumni and HEIs.

Cresswell (2014) differentiates typical features for qualitative research. According to him, it is typical that the researcher takes a vital role in the execution of the research and that the research takes place in a natural environment. Furthermore, Cresswell claims that using multiple sources or informants and inductive and deductive methods to analyze material as well as reframing and adjusting the research strategy on the go are typical elements of qualitative research. Cresswell portrays qualitative research as a holistic approach to science and research.

The views of Cresswell are shared by Alasuutari (2011), who portrays qualitative research as an approach that aims to shed light on a single topic and create a logical holistic view of it. Alasuutari claims, that even when the research is comprised from different informants, the argumentation can’t be built on statistical differences between the data provided by the different informants. In qualitative analysis, it is important to search for absolute results – unlike in quantitative analysis where conflicts and exceptions are allowed and expected from informants and the data. So, according to Alasuutari, statistical probabilities are not accepted as clues in quantitative research.

Instead of statistical probabilities, the qualitative approach begins by emphasizing meanings, subjectivity and experiences to understand and decipher how the informants view the question. In this case, the question is how do the different informants view the relationship of HEIs

and international alumni. In this context, it is probable that new meanings will arise and concepts must be interpreted and described further and deeper than initially thought. They are born out of interaction between the international alumni and HEI employers as well as the informants and the interviewer. (Ronkainen, 2011) The purpose given to international alumni by the informants and how they understand the alumni activities are as relevant as their direct answers to the interview question. They build a larger construction of meanings that can be understood on a deeper level than simply through observing the answers of the informants.

Alasuutari (2011) divides qualitative research into two major phases. He calls the first phase simplifying observations where the researcher takes a specific theoretical-methodological approach and uses it to comb through the observations. The goal is to find only what is relevant to the initial theoretical framework and research questions and these relevant observations form the core of what Alasuutari calls “raw observations”. He then suggests that the raw observations should be combined into a single or only a few major observations that can be located and formed by identifying common nominators or features in the raw observations or by forming a rule that covers the data without exception.

The second major phase is called solving the puzzle. By this Alasuutari means that the clues, observations or rules created in the first phase are given meaning through significance interpretation. This allows the researcher to separate different solution models to the observations based on the theoretical foundation of the research. He gives an example where a researcher observes that a person has performed tasks A, B and C and that what they have in common is that they pursue the goal of X. In the case of this study, the author might find that HEIs are working with international alumni in separate ways but towards the same goal – this would create a common goal like the X in the example.

When it comes to the role of theory, the author looks back to Cresswell (2014), who claims that the role of theory varies in qualitative research and can act as a copious explanation for the attitudes and behavior of people or it can be used as a specific point of view in regards matters related to gender, class, race or other factors. Furthermore, Cresswell argues that a theory can be formed because of an inductive process after the research has been completed or that the research does not have a fixed theoretical frame at all. In this research, a theoretical frame has been set, but it is used deductively as a guiding tool for the research process

and the end results are then compared to the theory again – does the assumed relationship between the research topic and theory still stand?

Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2008) also write about the general features of qualitative research. They argue that the researcher uses deduction that can be inductive or abductive. Inductive deduction is data-driven and in abductive deduction the researcher has some preliminary theoretical ideas, that the researcher will try to verify through the research material. In addition, Hirsjärvi and Hurme describe that the analysis is often started already in the interview situation and the analysis is done in close contact to the research material – unlike in quantitative analysis. The analysis techniques can be versatile and they have not been standardized, so there is no right or wrong way of doing an analysis.

The analysis in this research will be conducted by using the inductive analysis approach (Cattanzaro, 1988; Cavanagh, 1997; Thomas, 2006). The author chose it because as a form of content analysis it offers the author the most suitable tools to approach and analyse the research material and draw conclusions that, hopefully, answer the research questions. As the goal of this research is not to focus on narratives or descriptive analysis but rather introduce a better understanding of the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs, this approach is suitable. The decision is also supported by the form of research conducted – qualitative interviews and the transcribed material produced through them suit well for an inductive analysis approach.

It is important to be able to build a holistic view of the complex research topic through informant interviews in the HEI environment. The author shares Cresswell's (2014, p. 15) definition of qualitative research approach:

"An inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting."

4.2 Critique Towards Qualitative Research Approach

Both qualitative and quantitative research approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. Professor Pertti Töttö has argued against qualitative research approach claiming it can never answer the question "why". (Ylioppilaslehti, 2000) This is in principle true and professor Töttö

also continues stating that it is not supposed to do so – but the problem is that many academics and students would like it to.

Bryman (2012) describes qualitative research as dependent on the researchers personal and subjective interpretations of the research topic and material. Furthermore, he states that it is difficult to repeat the research (for example interviews) and that it lacks proper transparency compared to quantitative data. Finally, Bryman argues that the biggest problem with quantitative research method has to do with transparency – or lack of it. Alasuutari (2012), on the other hand, regards quantitative research method as situational and adds that it is not supposed to generalize but rather question foregone conclusions with a goal towards explaining a specific societal phenomenon.

4.3 Research Material and Methods

The core of this research are the semi-structured interviews conducted for seven elite-informants in two different HEIs in Finland. However, research interviews were not the only source of information used. The author followed the thinking of academics like Cresswell (2014) and Hirsjärvi et al. (2014) and utilized multiple sources of qualitative data to acquire usable research material.

Using three major sources of information – semi-structured interviews, literature review and written and online sources – aims to make sure that research and the findings are valid. According to Cohen and Manion (2000), this is called triangulation and

“it is an attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint.”

Four types of triangulation	What	How
Methodological triangulation	Using more than one data-gathering method (interviews, written sources, questionnaires, documents)	Using interviews and online surveys.
Theory triangulation	Using more than one theoretical approach to interpret the same phenomenon	Using NPG and NPM.
Investigator triangulation	Using multiple researchers to interpret the phenomenon	Having a professor use the same data and seeing if the professor has the same results.
Data triangulation	Using multiple sources to verify consistency of the phenomenon	Conducting research during different times, in public or private, different people with different views

Table 4. Created by the author using sources by Denzin (1978, 2006), Patton (1999, 2001) and Creswell (1998)

Written and Online Research Material

To learn more about the relationship of HEIs and international alumni, it is important to also understand the expectations the parties have for each other. As this research is focused mainly on the perspective of the elite-informants of the case-study HEIs and does not cover the side of the international alumni, it is natural to look for relevant research material made public by the HEIs themselves. Surprisingly, valid and relevant material related to alumni, let alone international alumni, was not in abundance to be found.

The written material used in this research were the strategies of the case HEIs, information regarding alumni in public web domains of Finnish HEIs, public statements regarding alumni and international alumni or education export and the Ministerial Strategy regarding education export. The author acquired research material regarding education export, alumni and international alumni to be presented as examples of what are the official and public views HEIs share regarding these topics. The collected material mainly used to construct the interview frame and to understand more about the topic.

Literature Review

In addition to available research material from HEIs, an extensive literature review was also conducted regarding both research done about alumni, international alumni and the NPM and NPG models. It was quickly discovered, that the especially the NPG model had not been utilized as a model to study HEI and especially alumni. The literature review has been reviewed already in previous segments of this research.

Research Interview

The basic research methods for collecting research material can be divided into four groups: surveys, interviews, observations and document analysis. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2014, pp. 191-220) So, the author had various possibilities to collecting data, but not all of them were suitable. A survey study conducted online would have given the author massive amounts of data and a chance to generalize the findings, but it would have not given the opportunity to observe the informants and their reactions nor would it have given affirmation that the author was asking the right questions. Observing HEI staff or international alumni was quickly deemed too labour intensive and time consuming even though it could have produced valuable information regarding the cooperation of international alumni and HEIs. Document analysis would have been

a viable approach for this research, but unfortunately there simply isn't enough documentation regarding the research topic to conduct feasible research. However, interviewing informants in the case-study HEIs gives the author a chance to understand and observe as well as learn from each informant – to make sure that the right questions are asked.

Interview as a general term is easy to understand, but as a research method it can be divided into many segments or categories. The essence of it is, of course, discussion – between two or more people. The difference between an interview and a regular discussion is, that in an interview one takes the role of the interviewer and controls the situation and discussion. Some academics prefer the term research interview instead of just interview to underline the goal-orientation and academic approach it has. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 1991, pp- 27-30)

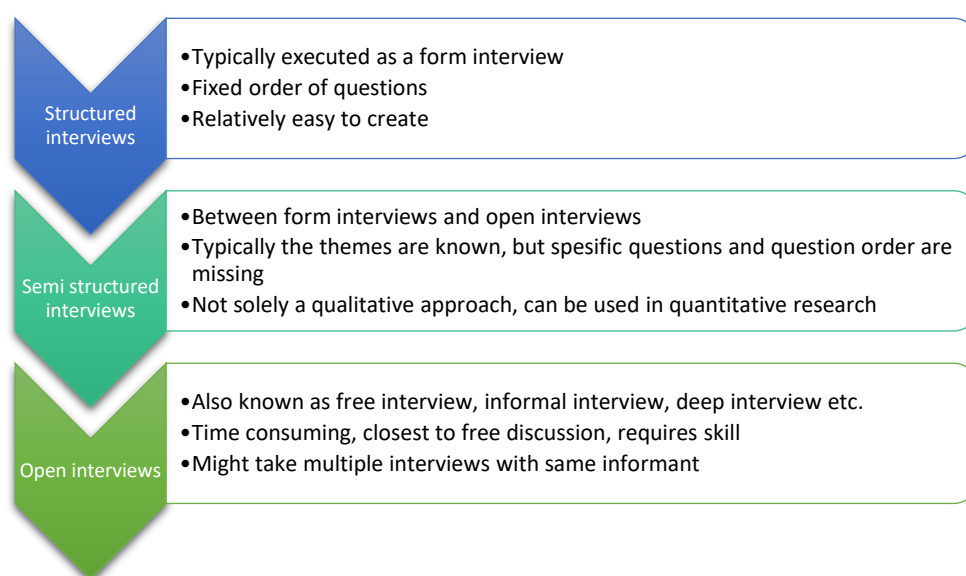


Figure 4. Research interview categories by Hirsjärvi et al. (2014, pp. 207-212). Formed by the author.

Structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and open interviews are used for different purposes and executed in diverse ways. The flow in this division is based on how tight and pre-formed the structure of the interview is: on one end, the interview is completely structured and formal and on the other end it is unstructured and flows free. A prerequisite for a strictly structured interview is having enough understanding of the phenomenon and a clear idea of what must be asked. On the other end of the spectrum the idea is to find out more about the research topic through free discussion. The open interviews are used to get in depth knowledge of the research topic from a certain small number of informants. (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2010, p. 48)

“When conducting research on people, why not take advantage of the fact that the informants can inform us about their matters?”

Hirsjärvi et al. (2014, p. 204) quote Robson (1995, 227). Translated by the author 26.8.2017

The author finds this quotation to be quite significant for this research. For a topic that has not been studied extensively, it is the opinion of the author that it is best to discuss about it directly with the relevant people. It is also the primary method used in qualitative research approach. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2014).

Hirsjärvi et al. (2014) echoed by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2010) frame the benefits of interview as research method. They claim that compared to other data gathering forms, the great benefit is that the interviewer can monitor and adjust the process and change the setting or order of the questions when required.

1. A need to emphasize the informant as a subject in the research situation. The informant can create meanings and is an active counterpart.
2. The topic has not been covered widely or is unknown. It is difficult to estimate what direction the research might take.
3. The results of the interview are part of a larger context. Expressions, gestures, background data and other things are important and relevant.
4. It can be estimated that the answers are versatile and sprout.
5. There is a need to clarify answers (for example from surveys).
6. There is a need to deepen information. For example, asking grounds for an opinion expressed.
7. There is a need to study sensitive or difficult topics (controversial among the academia).

Table 5. Seven reasons to choose interview. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2014, p. 205. Translated by the author).

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2014) and again by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2010), an interview is a valid tool in situations where it is difficult to estimate the direction and outcome of the research. Hence, choosing semi-structured interviews and theme analysis as the approach for this research is justified due to lack of previous research (observed in the literature review). Through the semi-structured interviews, it is possible to gain in depth knowledge and a clearer picture of the relationships and views the informants have regarding international alumni, education export and their organizations structures, goals and purposes.

Semi-structured interview is also a suitable approach as it gives the author a chance to observe informants in their natural work surroundings. The informants were given the opportunity to

freely choose the location of the interview and during the interview the possibility to direct the path of the discussion – they were subjects that had power. This is, from the author's perspective, important as it sheds light of the dynamics in the HEIs. How are different responsibilities divided, who is in charge on strategic or operational levels, how do different informants describe the same topics? In addition, the topic is somewhat sensitive. Many of the informants requested that their names nor the name of the HEI in question would not be published as part of this research.

It is important to remember that interviews as research methods also have their flaws. They are quite demanding for both the interviewer and the informants and can take a long time preparing, conducting and analysing. The interviewer should do a practice run of the interview to get a proper flow and to avoid simple mistakes like forgetting the batteries from the voice recorder or affecting the direction of the discussion too much or too little. There is also quite a lot of work in finding suitable informants and having them spare the time to do the interview if the researcher lacks contacts. Again, if the researcher knows the informants in person, that can influence the outcome as well – this is something to take into consideration in this research. It must be recognized that the interviewer can and will affect the validity and credibility of the research just by participating in the process (for example through gestures). (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2010.)

The informant can also affect the validity of the interview by trying to please the researcher or present him/herself as a good citizen, cultural person, morally high or downplay negative features like illnesses or disabilities, criminal or abnormal behaviour, financial difficulties etc. They are also a matter of culture or even local behaviour inside a country and it is critical that the interviewer identifies them and understands the significance of this behaviour and the affects it can have on the validity of the research. (Foddy, 1993).

4.4 The Case, the Case-Study HEIs and the Elite-Informants

The tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the HEIs is an interesting case that has not been studied before. In the context of education export, it is also a very current topic. The case-study HEIs are the test-environment of the research. They are platforms and arenas for the semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted to the elite-informants chosen from within the case-study HEIs. The elite-informants offer their subjective views from their own and from the perspective of the case-study HEIs and give a unique opportunity for

the author to understand more about the research topic. The author has many reasons to choose the case-study HEIs presented in this research. The first and most obvious reason is that both have international alumni and deal with education export and as such can act as platforms and sources of information to a research topic that is very current, interesting and has not been studied extensively by the Finnish academia.

Education export is on the verge of breaking through in Finnish HEIs as degree programmes with tuition fees for non-EU/ETA-students have been made legal and with HEIs working hard to sell their education both for applicants coming to Finland to study and for customers interested in abroad education.

Education export is also a strategic level interest for the Ministry of Education and visible in the Ministerial Strategy. The Ministerial Strategy also stated that alumni should have a role in advancing education export, which makes the case of this study relevant also on a national scale. Eventually, it will be interesting to compare the results of this research to the official reports based on the Ministerial Strategy – did HEIs take steps to execute the Ministerial Strategy or not?

A hypothesis can be made regarding the tasks and roles designated by the HEIs to the international alumni. HEIs are international by nature and for decades' foreign students have arrived in Finland to study, academics have worked abroad and formed international research networks and exchange students come and go in and out of the HEIs. With this level of exchange of both people and knowledge, the Finnish HEIs have, purely in numbers, thousands of former foreign students, international alumni. The hypothesis is, that the Finnish HEIs are looking for ways to utilize these international alumni to advance their education export efforts. Interviewing the elite-informants in the case-study HEIs gives the author of this research a chance to learn more about the ways HEIs are developing the relationships they have with international alumni and what are they planning. A chance to observe and analyse the relationship in a changing situation.

Utilizing international alumni in education export efforts is also interesting because it is likely to cause direct interaction between HEIs and international alumni. The alumni coordination and activities produces by HEIs can be quite passive and as such can't produce in-depth knowledge of the research topic.

The case offers an opportunity to analyse and observe in practice what tasks and roles the HEIs designate to the international alumni and hopefully identify elements of the NPM and NPG models. A case-study focused in two HEIs can't be used to generalize the results to cover all the Finnish HEIs. As the NPM and NPG models are most commonly used to study the public sector, especially in municipal research, they provide different angles for this research. In addition, the ownership structure of the two case HEIs are different – one is owned by municipalities and the other one is privately owned. Are there any differences in the approach the HEIs have chosen that can be traced to the ownership base?

The Case-Study HEIs

It is also necessary to discuss why the author chose specifically these two HEIs as the places to find the elite-informants. In principle, the number of HEIs could have been higher and go as far as to cover every HEI in Finland. However, this would have taken quite a bit of time and might have forced the author to re-evaluate the chosen research strategy. The qualitative research strategy does not aim to achieve results that can be generalized and used to explain every choice made in every Finnish HEI, but rather it is used to really understand the situation in these specific two HEIs. Through this process, it is possible to get in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon and use this knowledge for further research on the topic. Hence, two HEIs are most likely enough, if the research itself is thorough.

The HEIs are labelled HEI Alfa and HEI Beta. The minimum-criteria set by the author had to meet two demands:

- 1) the chosen HEI must take part in education export
- 2) the chosen HEI must have an active alumni network

Both chosen HEIs meet these minimum criteria, but approach the two topics from quite different perspectives. For example, HEI Alfa coordinates alumni operations through a centralised model where one employee is responsible for the coordination of all alumni operations in the HEI. In HEI Beta every degree programme is responsible for their own alumni operations and no overarching coordination exists. The key differences between the HEIs are location, size and approach on alumni operations (centralized / decentralized).

Features	HEI Alfa	HEI Beta
Ownership	Private owners	Public owners
Location	Growth centre	Provincial
Size (students)	Over 10 000 students	Under 10 000 students
Multidisciplinary	Yes	Yes
Staff members	Over 600	Under 600
International students	From over 90 countries	From 70 countries
International partners	Approximately 200	Approximately 300
Service business	~3 million euros	~4 million euros
Education export	Under 1 million euros	1 million euros
Registered alumni	Under 30 000	Unspecified
Alumni coordination	Centralised	Decentralised

Table 6. Features of case-study HEIs (data collected from annual reports and online sources)

It would have been interesting to conduct this research in every HEI in Finland, but this is not possible due to time and resource limitation. Hence, choosing two HEIs based on the above-mentioned reasons is a viable solution.

Almost all Finnish HEIs maintain a form of alumni network for their former students. These networks can be constructed in many ways, but the two common models are the organisational form and the concentrated form. In the organisational form, the alumni network is operated by a separate independent organisation that are controlled by the alumni themselves and receive funding from the HEI. The concentrated form is integrated in the HEI and as such part of its organisational structure (Aarva & Alijärvi, 2012). In the concentrated form, the actual alumni coordination can be centralised or decentralised. The centralised model means that a HEI has a specific unit or staff member(s) dedicated for alumni coordination. In the decentralised model, every unit, like degree programmes, is responsible for alumni coordination and there is limited overarching control.

According to Rhodes (2007), a public service is understood as a network of actors with goals, values and norms that are holding the relationships together. He also emphasizes trust as an essential element for cooperation and the existence of the network. As a public service (as covered previously in this research) and part of public administration in Finland, HE can be observed through the NPM and the NPG models. Therefore, the producers of said service (HEIs) can also be observed in this framework and this creates the opportunity to analyse international alumni services (the concentrated form) as well.

The organisational form (alumni associations) of international alumni services are a different case, as alumni associations can't strictly be tied into the HEI structure. That is why the author

made the decision to exclude them from this research and focus solely on the concentrated forms of international alumni networks and the service and added value they produce.

Osborne (2006; 2010) describes the NPG model as a theoretical model that is based, among other things, on network theories. These network theories could have been the theoretical foundation for this research, but the author chose NPG as it also takes into consideration the complex institutional theories typical for the public sector - NPG has been applied, for example, in municipal research. The municipal sector can, in the opinion of the author, be compared to the complex social system known as the HE sector in Finland and a municipality to a HEI: both are part of the public sector, vary in form, can be viewed from many angles and rely on a set of complex relationships between actors and service producers.

HEIs keep in touch with alumni through alumni newsletters, alumni meetings and through online platforms like LinkedIn or Facebook or through CRM-systems. (Aarva & Alijärvi, 2012) These communication tools can be estimated to have a significant role in maintaining a relationship between HEIs and international alumni simply due to physical distance and they might vary vastly from the tools used to connect with partners that are physically closer to HEIs. This must be taken into consideration as the relationship can be quite different if it is, for example, only digital.

In the framework of NPG, understood from the perspective of network theories, the author can analyse the information collected from multiple sources and hopefully understand more about the concentrated international alumni networks and the complex relationships the HEIs and international alumni share in the context of education export. This allows the author to identify the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs faculty.

In this framework, the international alumni tasks and roles are uncertain. They might be partners that, assumedly, have an active role in the HE service production (education export). They might be stakeholders, that have a personal interested at stake when collaborating with the HEIs. Therefore, it is valuable to learn more about the continuously changing relationship of the key players (HEIs and international alumni): the terms of the relationship, the value base of the networks, what other actors in the service system are affecting the tasks and roles the international alumni have been designated and even technical solutions like communication

tools and methods for maintaining the complex network of actors. This research can't give an answer to all of these questions, but it is a valuable start.

The Elite-Informants

In qualitative research, the informants form what is called a discretionary sample instead of sample. This is because instead of statistical generalisations the goal is in trying to understand a phenomenon in a more profound way or the goal is to look for a new theoretical perspective for a case or a phenomenon. It is possible to gain significant information by interviewing a selected number of informants. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008.) As it is important to make sure that the selected informants have relevant information, the process of choosing them might take time and effort.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009) argue that the process of choosing informants should be open and explained in the research. This is echoed by Rubin & Rubin (1995) (as explained by Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) who underline the necessity of flexibility and transparency in all phases of the research. This includes the process of choosing informants. They explain how the process of choosing informants can start with only a crude plan that is developed through discussions with possible informants. This enables the researcher to test ideas, redirect the research if necessary and finally decide the who to choose as informants to be interviewed. It is also important to consider the informants as a group from the perspective of what is the goal of the research.

It is also relevant to think about the number of interviews and informants required to make the research valid. In a qualitative case-study, the number of informants is not as relevant as reaching the so-called saturation point – the point where no additional information is revealed. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008; Cresswell, 2014)

This saturation point can be hard to estimate, but according to Kvale (1996) (as explained by Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) a typical number would be around 15 interviews. The number of informants and interviews is always tied to the goal of the research and it can be significantly small as even just one informant can give a lot of information regarding the case.

The author started the process of choosing the informants by discussing the topic with possible informants from different HEIs as well as the instructor of the research. This exploratory phase gave the author a much better understanding of the topic and allowed the author to

test and modify the interview structure. It also helped the author to identify possible informants, much like in snowball sampling (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008), but it did not end up being the only method of choosing informants.

The topic of this research had not been studied before and as such the research questions could present quite a different outcome to what the author of this research assumed. It was therefore justifiable to select a specific and relatively small number of informants to interview as it presented the opportunity to spend more time with each informant. The number of informants was not deemed as relevant as the content and depth of what the informants had to say. Hence, the elite interview method in which the author identifies and interviews so called elite-informants was deemed as the best approach. (Dexter, 2006)

Based on this the author formed a set of principles that were used to decide the informants for this research. The first and most important principle was that the author chose the elite interview -method (Dexter, 2006), meaning that the author would hand-pick so called elite-informants that would possess the most valuable information and could benefit the research optimally.

- 1) Elite interview (Dexter, 2006)

The author would only use informants that the author estimated would have the most relevant information regarding the research topic and questions.

- 2) Representativeness of the informants

The author chose informants so that there would be correspondence between the two case HEIs. For example, interviewing an informant that was responsible of keeping in touch with international alumni in one case-HEI would mean interviewing an informant with the same responsibilities (even if not the same job title or description) in the other case-HEI.

- 3) Hierarchical cross-section of the case-study HEIs

The author wanted to interview informants from every level of the administration. There was a clear decision to exclude academic staff, even if they had direct contact with international alumni, as there was no evidence of the academic staff participating directly in education export efforts (aside from teaching of course).

4) Non-occasional approach

Choosing the informants was done by targeting specifically informants that were directly involved with a) education export efforts or b) international alumni. This approach was chosen, because even though other informants could have given interesting information and views from their perspectives, the author wanted first hand experiences. It was also necessary to see, if the informants that worked directly with education export were in touch with the people responsible for (international) alumni networks and vice versa.

The author spent quite a lot of time selecting possible the elite-informants and clarifying what roles they have in the HEIs. It was surprising, that the informant's position within the HEI had very little to do with the relevance of the knowledge the informant carried of the subject and that large variation could be identified between HEIs. For example, some HEIs had a specific department for alumni services and some did not and some HEIs had a clear leadership structure regarding alumni services and some did not. This made the process of choosing suitable informants quite difficult for the author.

The process of choosing informants started through discussions with possible informants, narrowing down to different sectors or fields and identifying the elite informants and where they worked in. There are visible and hidden hierarchies in many levels: between informants, between informants and international alumni, between informants and students as well as between students and international alumni. The author wanted to address these hierarchies, as they might be relevant from the perspective of the theoretical framework and could explain a lot about the decisions made regarding the utilization of international alumni in education export. Therefore, the author wanted to choose the elite-informants from both case-study HEIs in a way that would address the hierarchy. Are there differences in the approach on the subject based on the level of hierarchy the informant is from? Are there mixed signals regarding education export efforts or international alumni?

Finally, the author compared the elite-informant -candidates to make sure there was enough representativeness for case-comparison and hierarchical cross-sectioning and finally he created a list of elite-informant -candidates that he approached. The selected eight informants and the final seven interviews represent the outcome of this process. The author finds the process a success and is happy that for example, the saturation point was achieved.

Informant	Case-HEI	Hierarchical level	Title	Experience
Male 1	Alfa	Top-management	Vice Rector	>20 years
Female 1	Alfa	Middle-management	Coordinator (education export)	<5 years
Male 2	Alfa	Operational level	Project coordinator (education export)	<5 years
Female 3	Alfa	Operational level	Alumni coordinator	<5 years
Female 2	Beta	Operational level	Secretary (education export and alumni)	<10 years
Male 3	Beta	Middle-management	Head of Department	>15 years
Female 4	Beta	Top-management	International Relations Manager	>15 years

Table 7. Informants (Source: Research Interviews)

As mentioned above, the author planned to interview in total eight elite-informants – four from each case-study HEIs. Unfortunately, this was in the end impossible as the eighth elite-informant was unable to participate the scheduled interview due to personal reasons. The author pondered about locating another elite-informant in HEI Beta, but in the end time and resources as well as the saturation level persuaded the author to simply move forward with seven successful interviews.

Confidentiality

Even though documents and other data was collected from multiple HEIs, both universities and universities of applied sciences in Finland, the interviews were conducted in two HEIs. Due to the nature and sensitivity of the research topic, the informants and the HEIs preferred to stay anonymous.

Siebert (1992) defines confidentiality as the academic's *"agreements with persons about what may be done with their data"*. The informants regarded the topic of the research sensitive mainly because of two reasons:

- 1) the ongoing competition in education export between Finnish HEIs, the informants were afraid they would reveal sensitive information about their HEIs plans and positions
- 2) the hierarchy within the case HEIs, the informants represent people on different levels of the institutions, the informants were concerned that they would not be able to speak freely if their superiors could identify them

Hence, both the names of the case-study HEIs and the identities of the elite-informants will be coded to maintain confidentiality in this research.

The author has taken steps to make sure that the information shared in this research or its attachments will not reveal any sensitive information: the interview files are password protected, the transcriptions does not contain sensitive information that could lead to the identification of the informants or HEIs in question or the information is coded (names of informants and HEIs etc.) and all the data regarding the interviews is kept behind locked doors and password protected computers.

Even though the author has gone through many processes to protect the confidentiality of the informants and the case-study HEIs, it is possible that someone might recognise an informant or either of the case-study HEIs. It is difficult to balance between what is relevant for a reader regarding the research and where is the line between relevant information and sacrificing confidentiality. However, the author has made a clear decision – if the information can reveal the identity of the informant or the case-HEI, the author will not use it directly in the research. Through coding and changing names used in the examples by the informants, this should be possible.

4.5 Research Execution

The research initially began simply as a desire to understand better how the Finnish HEIs cooperate with their alumni. It was something the author had approached previously (Aarva & Alijärvi, 2012), but also a current topic as the Ministerial Strategy set clear goals for HEIs to utilize alumni in their processes. With the national focus in HE leaning towards education export, due to recent changes in legislation, it was a natural setting for a study focused on the tasks and roles of the international alumni. The theoretical models were chosen because the NPM model is well-rooted, has been used in HE research and emphasises the managerial approach and the NPM model has a solid foundation in networking theories but also takes into consideration institutional theories that are relevant in public sector.

The initial research strategy was to interview 8 staff members in different HEIs, both universities and universities of applied sciences. However, the author changed his approach after the literature review where it became evident that the topic had not been studied before (at least in Finland) and that the chosen research strategy and methods did not support such a comparison. In the end, the author estimated that the possible differences in the approach were not relevant for this research and as such there was no need to separate universities and universities of applied sciences, simply referring them to as HEIs would be sufficient.

The author decided to interview selected, elite-informants consisting of the case-study HEIs faculty working on different administrative levels of two different HEIs. The research was conducted as a semi-structured theme interview with open questions focused on three major themes. The author approached the chosen elite-informants first by email as it seemed both polite and an opportunity to motivate the informants to become interested in the research. The email invitation included a brief summary of the research strategy, a description of the goals and suggestions for possible interview dates. The email was first sent to 6 informants and two departments and in two days the author had scheduled interviews with 5 informants.

One department corresponded the email by declining the interview invitation because the department, focused on education export, had nothing to do with alumni and as such could not help in the research. The author tried to persuade the representatives of the department by clarifying that it was not necessary to operate directly with alumni, but was in the end unsuccessful in persuading them, even though an effort was made. This is an outcome that can be expected (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). The department was replaced with informants from another department working with both alumni and education export and an informant was willing to participate in an interview. As a side note, the decline from the interview can also be relevant information, as it revealed that this particular department had nothing to do with international alumni. This was an unexpected result that revealed the decentralized alumni coordination model initially – it became evident that there were clearly two separate models to coordinate alumni in HEIs as part of the HEI administration.

Finally, the author had scheduled interviews with 8 elite-informants from two HEIs. The research interviews were conducted in May – June 2017 in the two case-study HEIs and in the premises chosen by the informants. This was done to make the informants feel comfortable and in control (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008). The research interviews were recorded with the consent of the informants and transcribed shortly after to conduct the analysis. On average, one research interview took around 40 minutes with the shortest being 30 minutes and longest 70 minutes. As there was a promise of confidentiality, all the identifier information was saved in a different voice file before the actual interview was conducted. During the analysis and reporting phases, all the data that could lead to breaching of confidentiality, was coded or removed. This includes direct quotes and expressions that are identifiable.

The purpose of the research and the three themes were explained to the informants. The informants could freely discuss the topics based and some of the critical concepts (alumni vs. international alumni, education export) were conceptualized during the discussions. This was done, because different elite-informants seemed to have differing views on them and it might have affected the results of the interviews. Same thing was also noticed by the author as he went through the case-study HEIs website regarding alumni – they defined the concept in a bit different manner even within the same case-HEI. As a topic that has not been studied much and with relatively new themes like education export, this was seen necessary by the author.

The research interview was conducted as a semi-structured theme interview with themes focused on international alumni tasks and roles, education export and the relationship of HEI and international alumni. The themes were chosen to combine education export and international alumni in a narrative that would reveal information about the networks, connections the case-study HEIs and international alumni share and the tasks and roles of the international alumni have been designated with. The semi-structured interview was formed based on the research question. The research interview was conducted using mainly open questions and follow up questions that rose during the interview. These follow up questions were used to gain additional information on phenomenon and specific topics. (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) The interview frame was built initially based on the Ministerial Strategy and the literature review and modified after the test interview that the author conducted. In addition, the author searched the websites of the case-study HEIs to find any information regarding alumni and international alumni and used the found data to develop the semi-structured interview. This made it much easier for the author to understand the situations in both case-study HEIs, even though much data was not found in either of the websites.

Two things became evident during the test interview: 1) as the research topic had not been studied before, it was necessary to focus on the interpretations of the elite-informants regarding the topic, and 2) the theme interview would have to be modified as some of the questions did not produce an echo in the test informant. Therefore, the author added new questions – first left outside of the theme interview – as he saw them necessary. These questions were mainly related to conceptualizing (education export, international alumni). According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008), this can be typical in theme interviews and an example of open

interview approach where the interviewer aims to gain in depth knowledge of the topic from the informants.

As mentioned before, during the interview process one of the elite-informants had to cancel the scheduled interview time due to personal reasons. At that point, most of the research interviews had already been conducted and a sufficient saturation level had been achieved, so due to time and resource limitations the author chose to limit the number of interviews to seven instead of eight. The decision is also based on the form of the research - the goal of a qualitative interview is not to generalize the phenomenon but to find new and focused knowledge on specific topics (Hirsjärvi et al. 2014). Additional research interviews could have been used to find new views regarding the ways international alumni are being utilized in education export efforts and what tasks and roles they have in general, but that would have also required choosing another 1-2 case-study HEIs. Regarding the case-study HEIs chosen for the research, the necessary saturation level was achieved and the criteria (f. ex. hierarchical cross-section of the case-study HEIs) were met. The critical information required for the analysis regarding tasks and roles of the international alumni were gathered in the seven research interviews conducted and as a discretionary sample they served their purpose.

The transcription of the research interviews was conducted by the author with a specific and repeated method.

- 1) The transcription process was always started one day after each research interview. The author marked down his own thoughts about the interview process and started the transcription by a brief description of the interview situation. The transcription process typically took a full working day.
- 2) The transcriptions were written using the spoken language used by the informants. The author left out some of the repetition and expletives that were evaluated as irrelevant or incoherent. All the longer pauses, expressions of emotion (like frustration or laughter) and other significant remarks were documented in the transcriptions.
- 3) The transcriptions were coded to maintain confidentiality. The informants were given pseudo-names and codes and a folder was created for each informant consisting the transcribed interview and the original recordings.

The final transcribed interviews consist of approximately 71 pages with font size 12, spacing 1 and Calibri-font. The form in which the transcriptions were written aimed to enable the use of qualitative analysis software so the text was written in a coherent form following the instructions given by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008).

4.6 Research Analysis

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2014) the analysis of a qualitative research is not a linear process that starts at a specific stage of the research. Rather, the analysis is an ongoing process where, instead of a linear direction, the path is meandering and can take steps back when necessary. However, especially in a Master's Thesis where the author often lacks experience, it is important to start the analysis immediately after the data has been collected.

Analysing quantitative research material demands a distinct set of tactics from qualitative research material analysis. Explanatory approach is typically used for quantitative analysis that uses statistical analysis but in qualitative research the approach aims to understand a phenomenon through qualitative analysis. The key is to choose an analysis method that enables the researcher to answer the research questions in one way or another. This can be especially tricky in qualitative analysis. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2014)

Kvale (1996) also describes a typical challenge regarding qualitative analysis: the amount of interview material and how to approach it. He states that it is too late to think about the analysis after the interviews have been made. The analysis tactic must be chosen before conducting the interviews to ensure that the structure of the interviews and transcriptions support the analysis.

Eskola and Suoranta (1996) state that qualitative interview material can be approached in at least three diverse ways:

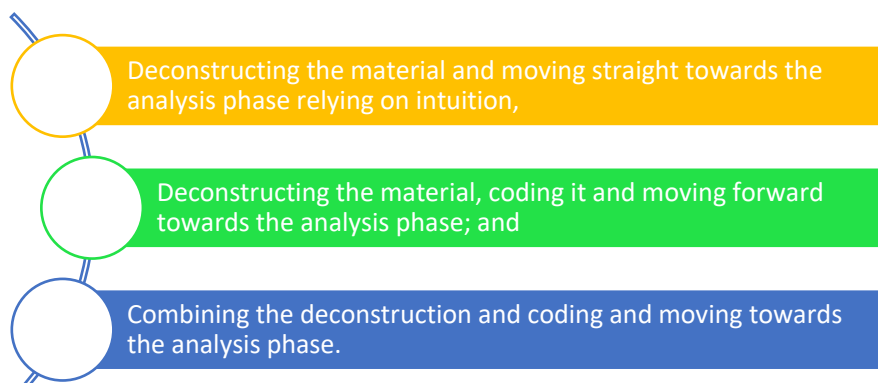


Figure 5. Three ways to analyse qualitative data (Eskola & Suoranta, 1996)

The deconstruction, coding and analysis can be seen either as separate or parallel processes depending on whether the research is hermeneutically focused or not. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) The author does not adopt a hermeneutical approach and instead views the deconstruction, coding and analysis as three separate stages and processes of the research.

Geertz (1993) as described by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008) has introduced the terms thick description and thin description. With thick description, the researcher tries to describe the phenomenon thoroughly but with the thin description the researcher only focuses on presenting facts. The author will utilize thick description methods in this research. It is also important to remember that the role of the researcher should stay objective, even though the author has ideas and views regarding the topic of the research.

Part of the analysis is deduction conducted by the researcher(s). Deduction can be focused on finding the answers from the research material (inductive) or focused on proving a theoretical idea or lead by utilising the research material (abductive). (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) This research is conducted by using the inductive analysis approach. The author initiates a dialogue of sorts with the research material that will hopefully produce answers to the research questions.

Qualitative research has an abundance of possible analysis tactics, but none of them have a clear dominant status. Many academics utilize multiple analysis tactics to cover the same research material. The tactics are not standardised and it is impossible to state that one tactic would be the only suitable one for a specific research. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008) To understand more about the different analysis tactics, the author familiarised himself with the views of multiple academics and read through qualitative research articles.

For example, Kvale (1996) suggests that it is possible to find meanings from the qualitative research material through classification or finding narratives or through ad hoc -approach where the researcher uses multiple methods to analyse the material. Alasuutari (2011,) argues that the process includes simplifying the observations and solving the riddle. Dey (1993) describes qualitative research material analysis as a three-stage process that includes description, classification and combining of the material.

Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008), on the other hand, follow the footsteps of Dey (1993) with a three-step approach: 1) describing, 2) classifying, and 3) combining the research material. The first

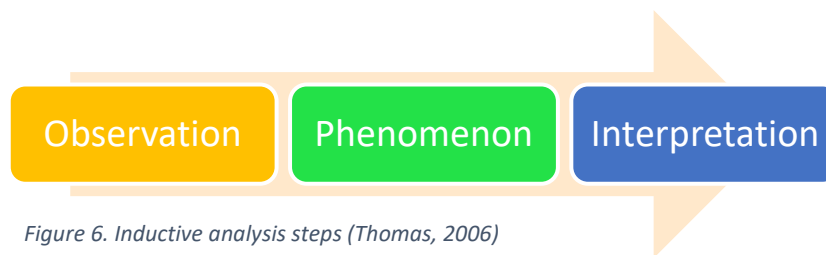
step is to describe the research material and reduce it to create a foundation for the analysis. The second step is to classify the research material to enable the researcher to analyse, simplify and compress the data. The last step is about finding similarities or regularities from the coded material. The goal is to enter the deductive analysis phase where the researcher observes the material from his or her own perspective and develops a versatile theoretical point of view for the classified material. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme, 2008)

Thomas (2006) describes in his article *A General Inductive Approach for Analysing Qualitative Evaluation Data* another general approach for analysing qualitative research material. The article, published in the American Journal of Evaluation, describes an analysis tactic called a general inductive approach that is primarily used to “*derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies*”. According to Thomas (2006), the purpose of the inductive approach is to 1) condense research material, 2) establish links between research questions and goals and the findings, and 3) develop theories or models about the research topic.

Comparison of Qualitative Analysis Approaches				
	General Inductive Approach	Grounded Theory	Discourse Analysis	Phenomenology
Analytic strategies and questions	What are the core meanings evident in the text, relevant to evaluation or research objectives?	To generate or discover theory using open and axial coding and theoretical sampling	Concerned with talk and text as social practices and rhetorical or argumentative organization	Seeks to uncover the meaning that lives within experience and to convey felt understanding in words
Outcome of analysis	Themes or categories most relevant to research objectives identified	A theory that includes themes or categories	Multiple meanings of language and text identified and described	A description of lived experiences
Presentation of findings	Description of most important themes	Description of theory that includes core themes	Descriptive account of multiple meanings in text	A coherent story or narrative about the experience

Table 8. Comparison of Qualitative Analysis Approaches. Thomas (2006)

The research tactic explained by Thomas (2006) has been introduced by many academics (Creswell, 1998; Dey, 1993; Silverman, 2000; Janhonen & Nikkonen, 2001). This inductive analysis approach starts by reducing the data into phenomenon, categorizing the phenomenon and finally abstracting the data so that the researcher can draw conclusions and condense results from the analysis. It requires the researcher to go through the research material multiple times, observe it from different perspectives and through the research questions and categorize it into distinct categories in various levels.



The analysis in this research will be conducted by using the inductive analysis approach (Cattanzarro, 1988; Cavanagh, 1997; Thomas, 2006). The author chose it because, as a form of content analysis, it offers the author the most suitable tools to approach and analyse the research material and draw conclusions that, hopefully, answer the research questions. As the goal of this research is not to focus purely on narratives or descriptive analysis but rather introduce a better understanding of the tasks and roles the international alumni have been designated with and the theoretical administrative models that might be implemented in the case-study HEIs, this approach is suitable. The decision is also supported by the form of research conducted – qualitative interviews and the transcribed material produced through them suit well for an inductive analysis approach.

The author will first go through the gathered interview data from a data-driven perspective and then from a theory-driven perspective. This is done because the conducted research is ground breaking and the author, as well as the readers of this research, must see the big picture. The data-driven approach will enable the author to utilise the theory-driven approach more conclusively, as the author must first identify the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni before he can analyse the theoretical roots behind them.

The limitation of this analysis approach is that if the raw research material is not conclusive enough, the research question might not be answered conclusively. Furthermore, the chosen approach can be quite demanding as it requires focus and ability to make deductions, but it does not offer generalisability.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

5.1 Informants' Viewpoints of the Complex Definition of International Alumni

The interview data shows that the concept of international alumni was not well grounded or defined in either of the case-study HEIs and variation existed even within the informant pool within one case-HEI. During the interview process it soon became evident that the term must be discussed to ensure that the interviewer and the elite-informants understand the concept of international alumni the same way. Variation occurred in defining who belong to the international alumni -category.

Neither of the case-study HEIs had officially defined what the concept *international alumni* really included: only foreign degree students, degree students in international programmes, exchange students, international staff members, staff members in international degrees etc. The author had to discuss the definition of international alumni with every elite-informant to get a sense of their understanding of the interview themes. A quote from a top-manager level informant regarding the definition of international alumni underlines the issue. Neither of the case HEIs have defined the concepts of *alumni* or *international alumni* thoroughly.

"Not as such. Now that you are asking me, I can't recall that we would have... like a definition for it [international alumni]. I am sure that we have had some definition in the early years, and I have a lot of material from those times. I do remember, from the definition perspective, that we have discussed the position of exchange students and if they can be considered alumni and also the double-degree and joint-degree students – are they alumni and can we benefit from them."

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

The case-study HEIs' elite-informants did not differentiate clearly between alumni and international alumni, as the biggest difference between the terms seemed to have to do with the degree programmes language being English instead of the nationalities of the former students. Hence, Finnish nationals could also be international alumni just as foreign students would not have been international alumni if they had studied in degree programmes conducted in Finnish or Swedish.

Aside from the unclear definition, the differentiation between *alumni* and *international alumni* was a challenge to some of the informants. The author used the term *international alumni*, but some of the elite informants disagreed with the use of the term – why did the

author separate alumni and international alumni at all? And who are international alumni in a global world where Finnish students might study in international degree programmes, move abroad and live there all their lives?

“Speaking in general terms, alumni are alumni. And because not all the Finnish alumni stay in Finland and not all the foreign alumni go back abroad. So, the alumni that are in Finland are mixed. Obviously, most of them are Finnish, but it is difficult to separate them.”

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

These categorizations and term definitions varied not only between the case-study HEIs but also within the case-study HEIs depending on what was the position of the informant. The informants that worked in top- or middle-management levels in the HEIs seemed to have a better grasp of the definitions or at least certainty that they had or had not been classified in their respected HEIs. Obviously, the informants that worked directly with alumni had a more profound view of the definitions as well.

“I have two ways of approaching the definition and I am not quite sure how to conceptualize it properly. Those who are not of Finnish origin and come to Finland for education or those who study in the international degree programmes. And we must decide internally how to do it [the division], but we have not done it. We keep referring to them as international alumni. Then there is the third part, those who move from Finland to abroad. And it is, like, a strategic decision that has to be done in top-management.”

Operational level, Project Coordinator, HEI Alfa

Based on the views and definitions given by the informants, the initial assumption made by the author based on the literature review was accurate – the concepts of alumni and international alumni had not been specified in a way that the same definition would be valid in both case-study HEIs. What was surprising, though, was that the terms were not specified even inside the case-study HEIs. This is some sort of indication about the efforts directed into international alumni operations, that will be described later.

However, the initial international alumni definition stated in this research applies to the general definition presented by the informants. International alumni – or alumni as suggested by some informants – are former international degree students of the case-study HEIs. The country of origin does not matter for this definition and for the purposes of this research, exchange students and former staff members were left outside of the definition.

5.2 The Tasks and Roles Designated to the International Alumni

Describing the nuances of a relationship might be tricky, if even defining the partners in the relationship is as tricky as it was for the elite-informants of this research. However, the elite-informants all revealed interesting and relevant information about their personal and professional views regarding the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni in general and regarding education export. The elite-informants observed these tasks and roles from different hierarchical levels within the case-study HEIs and through their individual perspectives. Each elite-informant gave examples of distinct tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs.

The Vice President (top-management) in HEI Alfa viewed international alumni as partners and stakeholders, but also saw possibilities in the role of customer. The elite-informant emphasized mentoring and different tasks related to education export, like acting as education ambassadors or providing leads to the case-HEI, as something they would like to see the international alumni working on more.

The Education Export Coordinator (middle-management) in HEI Alfa emphasized that the international alumni are first and foremost partners to the case-HEI, but the description also consisted elements of the stakeholder role. However, the informant did not see international alumni as potential consumers or repeating customers for the case-study HEIs. This view was repeated among the elite-informants in both case-study HEIs, as three out of the seven informants would not designate the role of customer to the international alumni and the other four informants only regarded it as a possibility and not something the case-study HEIs would actively pursue.

The Education Export Project Coordinator (operational level) in HEI Alfa stated that the overall connection with the international alumni was weak and relied solely upon one person working directly with alumni. The informant stated that the international alumni did not play an active role in education export as it was, but efforts were made to form partnerships with the international alumni. The informant also underlined that international alumni should not be regarded as customers and the case-HEI should not actively try to sell them additional educational services.

The Alumni Coordinator (operational level) in HEI Alfa was the strongest advocate of international alumni as partners. The informant stated that the international alumni could provide leads for education export, act as education ambassadors or in other ways boost the case-study HEIs success. The fourth elite-informant was also the only one that directly cooperated with the international alumni in the role of alumni coordinator in HEI Alfa that had the centralised model referred to previously.

The Educational Secretary (operational level) in HEI Beta designated the role of stakeholder and tasks like mentoring and guest lecturing to the international alumni. The informant saw potential in international alumni acting as education export ambassadors and sources of leads, but said that these were ideas on a concept level and not actively pursued now.

The Head of Department (middle-management) in HEI Beta spoke about the international alumni as stakeholders and partners, but not necessarily as customers paying for degree education. The informant talked about international alumni as donors and members of the community, but also saw immense potential in international alumni as sources of leads and quality assurance. The informant saw potential in international alumni purchasing educational services from the case-HEI for their companies, regions or countries – depending on their roles – but not directly to themselves.

The International Relations Manager (top-management) in HEI Beta firmly stated that the international alumni are whatever the case-HEI wants them to be – it is up to the case-HEI to decide what tasks and roles should be given to the international alumni and act accordingly. The elite-informant's own views were that the international alumni would serve the case-HEI best as quality assurance and sources of leads.

Quoting a Facebook-classic, one could argue that the relationship between the international alumni and the two-case HEIs *is complicated*. However, even though it is evident that the tasks and roles of the international alumni are still unclear for the case-study HEIs and the internal structure and division of coordination has not been done, all elite-informants saw great potential in the international alumni. The various tasks and roles that the international alumni currently have and could have in the future are dependent on the strategic and tactical decisions of the case-study HEIs.

1) The Case-study HEIs' Unique Approaches

This chapter observes the unique approaches chosen by the case-study HEIs in hopes that by observing them independently we can learn from both. In addition, it might be beneficial for both case-study HEIs to see what they can learn from each other, considering they both utilize a different model to administer the international alumni and execute alumni activities (as explained in chapter 4.4).

This data-driven segment of the analysis is conducted, because this research is ground breaking. The author must first identify the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni, before he can analyse the theoretical connections they might have. In the following chapters, the author goes through the interview data and identifies, from both case-study HEIs, the typical tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs. Afterwards, the author will analyse these tasks and roles to identify the connections they might have with the theoretical framework of this research – the NPM and NPG models. This latter part will be theory-driven.

In the previous chapter, the author presented a summary of the elite-informants views regarding the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs. In the following chapter, the author will identify the core tasks and roles that the elite-informants designate to the international alumni. To do this, the author will first summarize the current international alumni operations of both case-study HEIs using the gathered data from the elite-informants. This is done to enable the reader to see the big picture and to bring further understanding to the research topic and question. The author regarded this additional step important, because of the unique approached the case-study HEIs have chosen to administer their international alumni operations and because the topic had not been studied before. To achieve a level of thoroughness necessary to draw conclusions and answer the research question, this chapter is well-grounded.

Overall, the elite-informants explained what are the tasks and roles that the international alumni currently have in the case-study HEIs but also spoke about the potential of international alumni activities that would come to fruition as the relationship between the case-study HEIs and international alumni becomes stronger. The emphasis of the discussion was on education export.

The International Alumni Operations of HEI Alfa

Overall, the elite-informants in HEI Alfa (centralised model) described alumni activities and the task and roles designated to the international alumni comprehensively. There was a clear consensus among the elite-informants from HEI Alfa that the international alumni were an important group that could be utilized in, for example, education export efforts and the relationship shared between the international alumni and the case-HEI was described as visible both in celebration and daily work.

“It [the relationship] is visible in celebration, as the international alumni are welcomed into the events and we mention them in our speeches. But it is also visible in our daily work. What has brought them closer to our daily lives are the modern communication tools that enable us to involve the international alumni. We have even used them as guest lecturers in teaching.”

Top-Management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

However, as the author interviewed the elite-informants, various challenges rose from the informants regarding the strategic management and goal setting, different tools and solutions and the challenges posed by the centralised management model of the alumni network. In addition, the new opportunities regarding education export and the possible tasks and roles the international alumni have or could have regarding education export were among the topics that worried the elite-informants.

HEI Alfa approaches the management and development of alumni networks and operations through a centralised management model where a single individual is responsible for all the alumni-related activities, operations and dealings in the whole institution. It is a solution that is utilised in many HEIs both in Finland and internationally, but as a model it is rather demanding and requires certain fundamentals for it to function properly. Based on the interviews conducted with the elite-informants in HEI Alfa, the expectations and opinions of the top-management compared to the views of the alumni coordinator, do not completely meet. Because of this, other departments and faculty members are frustrated and confused about their possibilities to designate tasks and roles to the alumni and their possibilities to even keep in touch with the international alumni.

Below is an example of the contradiction between the top-management and the operational level in HEI Alfa. The top-management states that working with international alumni in edu-

cation export is important, but in the operational level has not received or identified this statement. It is valuable to pinpoint challenges like these within any organisation, but regarding the tasks and roles of the international alumni it is vital.

"We have really made it [working with international alumni in education export] a central goal for us. We have from the beginning known [that it is important] and based on our experiences tried to learn more about it. We are still in starting blocks when it comes to taking advantage of the full potential that the international alumni have. We are looking for the right ways to cooperate with them."

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

"I have never been given a goal [for developing international alumni activities], because it is like this sphere that no one has been able to focus on. [...] I have given myself a goal where I want to visit every single degree programme before the students graduate. Just to tell them, what is this alumni stuff all about. Because, if you do not know, how can you commit yourself? And regarding the purpose of the network and the HEI, I would be contempt with just alumni mentoring."

Operational level, Alumni Coordinator, HEI Alfa

Evidently, the alumni coordinator of HEI Alfa is uncertain of what the institutional level goals for alumni operations are. The centralised model relies on an individual or a department to take care of specific tasks, but should also offer clear targets and ways to monitor and evaluate success for the people responsible. In HEI Alfa, the alumni coordinator has had to set goals to measure success regarding the development of alumni operations, but this can't be a lasting solution.

The centralised model utilised in HEI Alfa is showing a certain lack of consistency, as some of the elite-informants stated that they were unable to connect with the international alumni directly. The Customer Relations Management System (hereafter referred to as CRM-system) in HEI Alfa was developed and managed solely by the alumni coordinator and other faculty members are unable to access it independently. This has resulted in situations where the faculty members have decided not to utilise alumni as it would either strain the alumni coordinator or be too complicated to constantly ask the alumni coordinator for help in finding suitable international alumni. As the alumni coordinator is the only one using the CRM-system, the responsibility of maintaining and developing the CRM-system is also on the shoulders of

one person. This topic rose especially in the middle-management and operational levels in HEI Alfa.

“What I would need is an alumni-database or CRM access for me. Something that would support the recruitment of students paying tuition fees.”

Operational level, Project Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

“Our work is not that consistent. In an ideal situation, we would have a database that was up to date and had visual elements etc. [...] It should be developed so that when I am sending an email to an alumnus in Vietnam from my email, it would also go to our CRM-system so that anyone could see what I have been talking to that alumnus.”

Operational level, Alumni Coordinator, HEI Alfa

Aside from the two identified major challenges, the overall result that can be drawn from the data is that the international alumni operations in HEI Alfa, especially regarding education export, are still under development. The first steps are being taken and the outcomes of those steps will affect the future development. International alumni are not involved in education export yet – there are plans, but they have not come to fruition yet.

“If you think about education export that has been on our agenda for a few years, currently we are collecting, informing and organizing the alumni so that they can become our spokespeople.”

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

“For education export purposes we have not been actively in touch with the international alumni. Instead, we try to contact them in general topics and if we go visit a location that has our alumni there, we will try to organise an event for them in that region or city.”

Operational level, Alumni Coordinator, HEI Alfa

It is somewhat expected, that international alumni activities and operations are still rather miniscule. The changes in legislation that enable education export are recent and HEI Alfa is still in a planning phase instead of execution. However, the Ministerial Strategy that stated the development of international alumni activities as one of the steps to be taken, is already several years old and comparing to the ambitious level set by the Ministerial Strategy, not much has been done yet.

What has been done, then? The data collected in the interviews conducted with the elite-informants of HEI Alfa paint a clear picture of what has been done: planning and small-scale trials of diverse ways to utilise international alumni and a lot of developmental work regarding the transition from students to alumni. Both are vital developmental steps that have been started in the recent years.

"We have been working hard to create alumni newsletters, events and all sorts of things to collect their contact information. A limited number of former students join our alumni network upon graduation and the contact information for the rest will be lost once they graduate. We have tried, especially in education export, to contact the international alumni, but to be honest we are not sure where they are. That is why we are doing all sorts of things to attract them and to keep in contact with them."

Middle-management, Coordinator (Education Export), HEI Alfa

Overall, the international alumni operations in HEI Alfa are still in rather early developmental stages. A lot is being done and development is happening, but the transition from a trial period towards international alumni operations being well-rooted core functions of the HEI is still far away. The identified key challenges have not been overcome and there is uncertainty as to what the role of the international alumni should be – different elite-informants regard international alumni from their individual or departmental perspectives and as such an overall picture of what is expected out of the international alumni is hard to describe. However, there is a clear will and allocated resources given towards the development of the international alumni operations which will no doubt lead into some positive results in the future.

"Ehh... they have tasks and roles, but, at this time, we have only been trying things out a little. If we are talking about, for example, education export then we must also separate tuition fee education from other forms of education export - in the first one the international alumni might have a key role in attracting new degree students that pay tuition fees."

Operational level, Project Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

Based on the interviews conducted with the elite-informants from HEI Alfa, the current tasks and roles designated to the international alumni mostly relate to alumni as mentors, alumni as guest lecturers and alumni as sources of prestige. Soon, the elite-informants of HEI Alfa hope to utilise international alumni as education ambassadors, providers of quality assurance in education export and as possible leads in education export. There were also those who saw international alumni as potential consumers and customers, but there was no clear focus on

this area of cooperation – as a side-product it would be acceptable. These tasks and roles will be discussed more in the following chapters.

Lastly, one of the elite-informants of HEI Alfa stated that the lives of alumni do not begin upon graduation. The growth towards becoming alumni should start already during studies by engaging with the alumni and seeing the possibilities that it brings. This is an important observation in the opinion of the author and something that has not been repeated too often in the literature related to alumni.

“We have been thinking about how to play the game already during the studies. We will not achieve wonderful things by handing the student an alumni letter upon graduation and have the student look at it as “oh you got this going on?” or, really, half of the students not even looking at the letter. And that might be a big step for us next, to have all forms of alumni activities become visible and integrated to the lives of the current students so that they can grow up to become active alumni.”

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

The International Alumni Operations of HEI Beta

The elite-informants of HEI Beta (decentralised model) shared a rather strong vision of the tasks and roles of the international alumni, but also the challenges and areas of development required to realise the potential of the international alumni. In HEI Beta, the responsibility over international alumni coordination and operations were divided to multiple people in different degree programmes and departments, which in the opinion of the author might be the key reason behind the strongly shared views regarding international alumni.

“I see it [the relationship] as quite personal, that we have these certain alumni that reach out to certain teachers or faculty members. And then there is the emphasis on degree programmes, that the alumni might value, that this HEI in general is a good thing, but the thing I [international alumni] am connected to emotionally is the degree programme where I graduated from.”

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

The elite-informants of HEI Beta also seemed to share a strong personal connection with the international alumni as they underlined the significance of the emotional connections and experiences that the international alumni gathered during their time as students in HEI Beta. According to many of the informants in HEI Beta, this personal connection between the HEI and the international alumni is something they work hard on to maintain and develop.

"I live in the assumption, that they [international alumni] have very fond memories and a strong emotional connection to us. That the experience, that they had here, is valuable to them and they are very willing, if we ask for their help or want to meet them. For example, I have this habit, that when I travel around the world, I will contact the international alumni that I know, and I will let them know that I will be in the lobby bar of this and that hotel and ask them to come and talk for a while. And surprisingly many show up."

Middle-management, Head of Department, HEI Beta

However, as the author interviewed the elite-informants, a specific challenge rose from the informants regarding the lack of resources directed to managing alumni operations and to the different tools and solutions used by the case-HEI. In addition, the new opportunities regarding education export and the possible tasks and roles the international alumni have or could have regarding education export were among the topics that worried the elite-informants also in HEI Beta.

HEI Beta approaches the management and development of the alumni networks and operations through a decentralised management model where the responsibility is divided among the faculty members of various schools and degree programmes and all the people working in HEI Beta are responsible for all the alumni-related activities, operations and dealings on an institutional level. This model demands certain fundamentals, like open communication channels and low hierarchy, to function properly and it can be rather demanding from a resource perspective. One of the key issues identified by the author from the interviews with the elite-informants of HEI Beta had to do with allocation of resources, especially in the operational level. Most of the informants were worried that there was not enough time to commit to the development of the alumni network from other work responsibilities and that the work done is not coordinated or based on any long-term planning. For a decentralised model, this is easily one of the most obvious challenges.

"It is always in the back of my head, that this is something we need to do much more about. But then the day goes by, and you notice that a month went by and a year went by just doing all the mandatory stuff we do. These are more developmental work. I don't know [who should develop it]. I would love it, if there was some [long pause] instance that would really be close to the students during their studies and then... and I am again saying this... there was someone who would have time to invest in to the international alumni."

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta

This overarching issue of time and other resources that the elite-informants were referring to might be one of the key issues slowing down or even stopping the development of the international alumni operations. Even though HEI Beta's elite-informants have a relatively clear picture of what they want out of the alumni operations, and it was repeated multiple times by multiple informants, this shared vision might not become reality without additional efforts and resources.

"We should be more systematic and utilize international alumni more and benefit them as well. Why? Well. That is a question, I ask myself often. Why are we doing this? Because we need the accreditation for our programmes and it demands it. But who needs this? And is it about the alumni's urge to come back and help, to give something back from what they have received from us [as students]? And of course, it is about the urge to get new students. We are always looking for more and more [education export] cases. Real contacts in companies and so forth. That is a good thing, but in my opinion, we do not have a clear goal. At least I do not know one."

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta

According to the elite-informants, the international alumni have a role in education export, but this role is rather small and the case-HEI is only now developing ways to involve international alumni in education export. According to the elite-informants, the reason for this is related to education export (including tuition fee education in Finland) being such a new phenomenon. The HEI is only now building its profile and agenda regarding it. HEI Beta simply has not had time to involve the international alumni into it as much as they want and plan to eventually. One of the reasons this research topic has not been approached before in Finland might be because it is still very early and data has not been accumulated regarding the international alumni role in education export. However, the informants provided information about their current operations where international alumni are involved and shed light to their future regarding education export and the international alumni.

"I think they [international alumni] do [have a role in education export]. If we want to contact them [possible clients] then the international alumni in the area might be the people we want to approach first. And now we have these cases where our former students are helping companies establish themselves in different areas. It is the same for us, they can help us sell our product – education."

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

Looking at the role that the international alumni have in education export from the perspective of the non-management informants, which are the people working most directly with education export and the international alumni, the picture is a bit different. The strategic level agendas and goals are stripped away and the every-day challenges become more evident. All the non-management informants and even one top-management informant stated that one of the major challenges is the lack of CRM-system. HEI Beta does not have a CRM-system at all and a simple excel sheet plays the role of an alumni database where the informants collect information. All the non-management informants regarded international alumni as potentially vital for education export efforts, but were more sceptic when it came to actual current fulfilment of this potential.

“At least a proper CRM-system. I dream that I would have one big excel, that was not an excel but a CRM-system that would be easy to use and would update automatically. And that I would have an intern or someone that could update the contact information and really keep the CRM-system usable. That I would know which faculty members are doing what with the international alumni. And that when a student graduates he would not simply vanish but transfer to the alumni register so that I could know where they are and what they are doing. This would enable us also to designate tasks and roles to the international alumni in education export.”

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta.

The challenges identified in HEI Beta are of technical nature – resources and tools. And regardless of these challenges, much has already been done with the international alumni. They have tasks and roles that have been designated to them and they have contributed back to the HE community. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the international alumni operations in HEI Beta are also in early developmental stages, even though the challenges identified are different from those of HEI Alfa. The emphasis in HEI Beta seems to be in community, but the tasks and roles vary depending on the elite-informant.

Summary of the Tasks and Roles Designated to the International Alumni

Overall, the tasks and roles the international alumni have been designated with, at least when observed from one side, are still developing. Neither of the case-study HEIs have set clear goals or strategic level measurements for their international alumni operations and the potential that international alumni have in education export has not been utilised properly. The elite-informants see the potential that the international alumni networks have, but either due

to time constraints, lack of clear goal setting and issues with the CRM-systems, the development is moving forward slowly.

Based on the interviews, the chosen coordination models (centralised – decentralised) affect the overall results in separate ways. All elite-informants in the case-study HEIs regard the role of the international alumni important in general and especially when it comes to tuition fee - based education export. None of the informants saw international alumni as insignificant to the HEIs or their education export efforts.

“We are utilizing international alumni [in education export] consciously and systematically. I wish, that we could do that more. We have had alumni doing training and as employees and some agents around the world that are our alumni, or this last one I am not so sure about, but that is one possibility. Always when we are traveling around the world, we try to have these alumni events and when we have contacts in the world and we know where they work, it is easier to contact them in person when we are around their location.”

Middle-management, Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

On the contrary, most if not all the informants emphasised the importance of having international alumni closely working as education ambassadors, sources of leads, statements of quality, mentors to current students and even donors and customers or just members of the HE community. All the roles were not seen as important or as strong and the case-study HEIs had a different emphasis on what roles to issue for the international alumni. In the end, these roles were identifiable in both case-study HEIs and as such create a sort of foundation that can be used to explain the relationship that the case-study HEIs and international alumni have from one perspective.

The tasks and roles the case-study HEIs elite-informants would like to designate to the international alumni are various. Using the inductive analysis method, the author combed through the data combined from the interviews conducted with the elite-informants and identified the following tasks and roles that the case-study HEIs wish to designate to the international alumni. All the tasks and roles were identifiable in both case-study HEIs, but a difference on emphasis was identifiable. HEI Alfa emphasised the tasks related to the stakeholder role and HEI Beta emphasised the tasks related to the partner role. Neither of the case-study HEIs em-

phasised the role of customer and the tasks related to it, even though there were elite-informants in both that viewed it possible to target education export to the international alumni from a customer perspective.

The question of international alumni as customers was a tricky one for all the elite-informants. All informants in the case-study HEIs had trouble observing international alumni as customers. Either such a role had not been officially given or the role had not set in. None of the case-study HEIs' informants underlined customer or potential customer as a significant role for the international alumni. The emphasis was given to roles that fall under the categories of stakeholder and partner, such as source of prestige, mentor, education ambassador and source of leads.

"Well. That [alumni as customers] is an interesting question. Perhaps the fact that I am unable to answer the question directly proves that in this matter categorisation is not necessary or feasible. It would be tempting to think that... or I kind of understand, that it might be easy to draw an analogy that our alumni are prospective repeated customers, who we can approach with a sales pitch. That would be one way to kind of approach the matter, but on the other hand when it comes to marketing, I have never done that."

Operational level, Alumni Coordinator, HEI Alfa

The idea of international alumni as customers was a topic that the informants were reluctant to respond to and a level of uncertainty was transparent in their responses. HEI Beta emphasized the role of customer more, but neither case-study HEIs are focusing on it seriously. It is also good to remember, that in Finland the idea of students or even former students as customers and tuition fees in general are frowned upon, at least to some extent, as Finland does not have a long tradition with tuition fees and HE is gratuitous for Finnish students. International alumni as customers were nonetheless a very sensitive and somewhat difficult subject to discuss and the informants were reluctant to blatantly state that HEIs would refer to international alumni as customers.

"The HEI wants to stay in touch with the international alumni and wants to maintain an alumni network both in Finland and abroad. And of course, we wish that everyone would have a positive image of our HEI and that our alumni would act as ambassadors and that they would feel positively about it and feel that they are receiving something in return."

Middle-management, Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

In both case-study HEIs the international alumni were placed in the role of guest lecturers and mentors and the significance of the work the international alumni do as crucial for the HEI. These roles were the strongest and the operations related to these roles were the most advanced. It can be said, that NPM-model is visible in the case-study HEIs through managerialism and the result-oriented approach. Both case-study HEIs used CRM-tools to manage the international alumni, even though HEI Alfa's CRM-tool was advanced compared to HEI Beta. There were not that many underlined goals coming from top-management regarding utilization of international alumni, but overall the goal was to use international alumni in mentoring and as guest lecturers.

"We have alumni participating the lectures as guest lecturers, company representatives and simply as alumni. This could have a huge significance. Could. And it does even currently hold some meaning for the content of the subject to have a guest lecturer. We have a mentoring pilot too."

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta

Based on the elite-informants' answers, the most rooted roles for international alumni are mentoring, guest lecturing and different career stories used as sources of prestige. Based on the background research conducted by the author, this is the case in many of the Finnish HEIs – the typical international alumni operations deal with the same topics and view alumni as stakeholders. However, when it comes to management and goal setting of (international) alumni operations, the case-study HEIs are lacking. There are very few strategic level decisions and goals regarding the international alumni and they are something extra, that can be focused on when time allows, but not as a high priority matter.

The interviews revealed that the informants in the case-study HEIs impose distinct roles to the international alumni that can relate to the role of partner. Many informants stated that the international alumni could be important sources of leads and as such help the education export efforts of the case-study HEIs. However, the most frequently mentioned tasks were related to international alumni as quality assurance and as education ambassadors. A middle-management informant from HEI Beta summarized the thoughts of the many – international alumni bring credibility to the case-study HEIs.

Top category	Parent category (roles)	Subcategory (tasks)
The roles and tasks of the international alumni in HEI	Customer	Repeating customer Consumer
	Stakeholder	Donor Mentor / guest lecturer Source of prestige for the HEI Member of the HEI community
	Partner	Education export ambassador Providing quality assurance for education export purposes Source of leads in education export

Table 9. Tasks and roles of international alumni. (Aku Aarva)

The above table is a summary of the identified roles and tasks designated to the international alumni by the elite-informants in the case-study HEIs. They are the combination of various tasks and roles identified, reduced and grouped by the author. Three parent categories (roles) were revealed from the transcribed interview data and nine subcategories (tasks) were identified fitting under them. These roles and tasks are the core of what the elite-informants would like the international alumni to do. In the following chapter, the data-driven analysis approach is changed into theory-driven approach and the three roles will be analysed through the theoretical framework of this research.

“Partner, deep throat, contact, facilitator, possible door opener. A kind of agent role, assistant. And possible a person who, like, understands about local cultures. And of course, source of leads. It has meaning, that we are pushing a case forward and we can say that this guy from this city has been with us. It is a case of credibility, that we can really say we exist and that this person from this town or country has been here. It is very different from me personally going to China and saying, please buy [education] from me.”

Middle-management, Head of Department, HEI Beta

2) The Theoretical Framework and the Findings

The tasks and roles designated to the international alumni have been defined in the previous chapter. Now, it is time to observe the data and the findings from the perspective of the theoretical frame of this research – the NPM and NPG models. The identified roles (customer, stakeholder and partner) and the identified tasks related to them are designated to the international alumni by the case-study HEIs and presented to the author by the elite-informants

during the interviews. Hence, possible connections between the data and the theoretical frame can be identified by observing the collected data – which is exactly what the author has done.

The Role of Customer

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the role of customer was not easy for the elite-informants to define. Some of the elite-informants viewed – or at least accepted – that the international alumni could be customers, but most of the elite-informants rejected the idea, perhaps out of principle. However, the idea of international alumni as customer would be quite natural when observed through the perspective of the NPM model, which gives an emphasis on service inputs and outputs. Furthermore, the efficacy of competition and the marketplace create a value base where international alumni could be potential customers or consumers of the products produced by the case-study HEIs. It is much more suitable to cover the role of customer than the NPG model that focuses on trust and relational contracts and puts an emphasis on service processes and outcomes.

From the perspective of NPM model, the idea that alumni are customers is simple: alumni can deliver money to the HEI. The international alumni network and the role of customer that the case-study HEIs might designate upon the international alumni could prove out to be very successful ways to gather revenue. It is all about being economic, effective and influential in managing the international alumni network and selling the alumni the products and services produced in the case-study HEIs. (Lähdesmäki, 2003, pp. 49-66.)

However, it is a whole other question if the case-study HEIs are willing to approach the topic from this perspective. The complexity of the topic is described well in the comment of a Project Coordinator focused in education export in HEI Alfa.

“This customer criterium has been under a lot of scrutiny here. We should have a clear front in this topic as well. The student is never a customer, right, so are alumni customers if they were not when they were students? This is a criterion that everyone has their own perspective. I do not see them as customers as much as I see them as partners. But regarding the official perspective, well that has not been decided yet – what is the role of the international alumni. But in the end the money comes from the customer and alumni can deliver money to the HEI – through participation and sparring and so forth. These are all tricky nuances.”

Operational level, Project Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

The NPM perspective has driven the public sector, which we include the HE sector in Finland, towards the customer orientation and approach. This perspective has transferred citizens of welfare states into consumers or customers of welfare services (Valkama, 2012, pp. 41-47). Regarding education export, it is necessary to ask if it has transferred international alumni from partners towards consumers of education export products or repeating customers of tuition fee education produced by the case-study HEIs? Certainly, this could be possible based on the data collected by the author as seen in the following example.

"Of course, we have this lifelong learning. We want that relationship to sometimes be a student relationship and as such they are members of our community. On the other hand, they can also be customers and as such there might be a certain visible hierarchy. [Alumni are] Both [potential customers and acquirers]. They are certainly our spokespeople and marketers, that pass on the good word. In the future, they might be the people that bring us clients and revenue, but they are themselves equally important. They represent the know-how that we have given them."

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

For the top-management informant in HEI Alfa, international alumni were both customers and customer acquirers. An emphasis was given, however, to elements that are not directly customer-related and represent more a stakeholder perspective where the international alumni are members of the community. In addition, there are elements that are examples of partnership, such as quality assurance in the form of spokespeople and marketers. In the end, the emphasis is leaning towards the idea of a partnership between the HEI and the international alumni, something that is typical for NPG logic, instead of the NPM model and the role of customer. This is a trend in the collected data. The elite-informants identify and admit that international alumni can be designated with the role of customer – like the NPM model would assume – but they hesitate to do so either because they see tuition fees as an issue, they do not see students as customers and imply the same to alumni or they see some other role to have more significance for the case-study HEIs.

"Perhaps both. It depends on what they are doing for us. [laughter, long pause] Yes. You never know where the people end up and what they will do. Someone might be working or a HEI or some ministry where they see a need for our education export services. In my opinion, they can be both customers and partners. I somehow feel that education export is in such initial stages that it is still looking for its form in many ways."

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

Comparing again the role of alumni to the role of citizen, according to Pollitt and Bouckaert (1995, p. 6) a citizen is defined as an individual that has rights and obligations whereas a customer is an individual that is seeking to fulfil needs based on his ability to pay for them. It is clear, that according to the data collected the role of customer is not gaining popularity within the elite-informant group. It is identified but not promoted. From the NPM perspective, the customer orientation within the case-study HEIs is not that visible or strong.

The Role of Stakeholder

The elite-informants had an easier time designating the alumni tasks such as donors, guest lecturers, mentors or members of the community. Some of them are relatively concrete and others are more abstract, some of them are intra-organisational and some observe the international alumni as external partners - therefore the common nominator is more difficult to identify. However, after observing and analysing the gathered data, the author was able to identify features from both the NPM and NPG models.

As mentioned before, the informants designated international alumni with several tasks, such as mentoring and guest lecturing, acting as donors and being members of the community. In addition, international alumni were also seen as sources of prestige for the case-study HEIs. These tasks can be abstracted into a role the author named stakeholder. The stakeholder role consists of tasks typically found in organisations where NPM is the leading doctrine and the purchaser-provider-model, entrepreneurial mindset and managerialism are strong (Hood, 1991; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). The public sector has been utilizing NPM through decentralization and specialization. Through NPM, international alumni are given specific responsibilities and roles in the HEI community – and they are viewed as part of the community as stakeholders.

However, the tasks in the stakeholder role also include elements that relate them to the NPG model. The NPG model is based on pluralism, networks and contracts with different partners i.e. corporatism (Osborne, 2006, p. 383). Tasks such as bringing prestige to the HEI community or acting as a mentor or guest lecturer for the students relate at least partially more to the NPG model than to NPM model, as the international alumni are partners and part of a larger community instead of external entities acting based on contracts. An example of the presence of both NPM and NPG model in the data can be seen in the following quotation. Here the international alumni are observed both as actors in a network but also sources of prestige.

“HEI Alfa wants to keep in touch with our international alumni and wants to have a network of alumni in Finland and aboard. And of course, we want to everyone to have a positive image of HEI Alfa and have alumni that are sources of prestige for us.”

Operational level, Project Coordinator (education export), HEI Alfa

This is not the only example of the stakeholder role designated to the international alumni by the elite-informants. The idea of international alumni as donors was repeated by multiple elite-informants in one form or another, but there was a certain level of scepticism towards this specific task. This was due to speculation that the culture in Finland and in Finnish HEIs would not support the idea that international alumni would become donors funding the case-study HEIs.

“Perhaps we could think like that [alumni as donors]. Especially if it [the donation] can be directed to specific program or region. I believe that we could have this culture of giving back and passing on in our international alumni. We have traditionally thought [in Finland] that it is done through taxes, but that has also somewhat changed.”

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

There are even wilder approaches to the task of international alumni as donors. One elite-informants reflected upon the idea of having a rich international alumnus donating ten million Euros to the case-HEI by paying tuition fees for several students from the home country of the international alumni. In this example, the international alumni have the role of a customer donating (purchasing) funds to the case-HEI to receive fulfilment (scholarships for new students) for their needs (prestige). International alumni as donors is an example of the NPM model in action, as customers seek satisfaction through the purchasing of services or products. (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 1995, p. 6.) The stakeholder role is a combination of both the NPM and the NPG models. The international alumni bring prestige and donations to the case-study HEIs but also gain and benefit from the cooperation. They are customers but also as partners with something to gain out of this aside from the services or products purchased.

“We are heading towards a direction where our international alumni become more and more successful and this success in their careers is bringing prestige to the whole HE community. This is a good trend that we wish to promote.”

Top-Management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

Based on the collected data, acting as donor, mentor or guest lecture are tasks that are more typical for the NPM model whereas bringing prestige to the case-HEI or being an active member of the community are more typical in the NPG orientation. The aforementioned are tasks that the international alumni are expecting and the case-study HEIs are paying a contribution of some sorts: visibility or other form of return for donors, concrete salary or compensation for guest lecturers and mentors. However, the latter are tasks that are based on cooperation where the case-study HEIs leave room for the independent actions of the international alumni and includes them as internal partners. (Osborne, 2006; 2010)

"Think about it. We have graduated students, alumni, that advance in their working life to various positions or start their own companies. They can offer our students mentoring, practical training positions, projects, or they can guest lecture in our classes. We have so many ways the international alumni can contribute and support us and our activities with their knowledge and connection and through their companies and careers."

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

The Role of Partner

Last but certainly not least is the role of partner. As every elite-informant presented the author with tasks that fit the partner role, the difficulty of drawing the line between stakeholder and partner rose. It is perhaps good to admit that this line is somewhat artificial and even abstract, simply because the theoretical models that formulate them are somewhat overlapping. However, the division between stakeholder and partner is done based on Figure 4 on page 23 of this research (Osborne, 2006). The emphasis has been given to the relationship with relationship to external partners and governance mechanism.

The principles of the NPG model are visible in the data in many ways and as such so is the role of partner. Most elite-informants referred to international alumni operations as an effort to build a cooperation network and referred to the international alumni as partners working towards similar goals. The attitude of the elite-informants was clearly customer oriented and the control mechanisms worked in many levels. These are all elements of NPG as described by Osborne (2006) and Hakari (2013). The case-study HEIs also have on their respected websites information about their alumni networks that the former students can join and information about services and cooperation models offered to the alumni, including international

alumni. This is an indication of an attempt to develop the (international) alumni network together with the partners, which is in accordance to NPG model.

"I believe it will become more focused. I believe that it will become more structured. So, some sort of international alumni chapters or something like that will be built. It will become more focused and goal-oriented and we will implement real goals regarding fundraising and sales work in specific regions. Our official view is that the international alumni network is one of our most important partners from the perspective of education export."

Top-management, Vice Rector, HEI Alfa

All the informants stated that, at this stage, the most important and obvious next step is to create a proper foundation for the international alumni networks. These networks can then be utilized in several ways, for example in education export. The NPG model emphasizes customer oriented approach and cooperation with stakeholders. This is visible also in the case-study HEIs as they focus in cooperation with the international alumni.

According to Osborne (2006), as described in chapter 3.1 of this research, the NPG model is based on trust or relational contracts and the emphasis is on service processes and outcomes. The focus is on inter-organisational governance, which in the case of HE export and international alumni is governance focused on, for example, international alumni (independent organisations) as education export ambassadors (governed by the HEI). The NPG approach views international alumni as partners and (an external) part of the HEI network, where the role of the HEI is to coordinate the international alumni in their distinct roles. This is also visible in the data collected through the elite-interviews as underlined by the following example.

"We want to utilize international alumni in our commercial operations and create common good. Now that we are competing in the private sector, we want to use the international alumni but also give them opportunities and benefit them. It can begin with a visit abroad. We know that we have international alumni there or we will ask for a list of our local alumni and we will invite them to participate, if there is a chance for it. Or it can start with some foreign university contacting us and we would do a project for them. So, it can be on spot or in Finland, if we have international alumni here that could give us cultural knowledge."

Middle-management, Coordinator (education export) HEI Alfa

The interviews revealed that the informants in the case-study HEIs impose distinct roles to the international alumni that can relate to the NPG model. Many informants stated that the international alumni could be important sources of leads and as such help the education export efforts of the case-study HEIs. However, the most frequently mentioned roles were related to international alumni as quality assurance and as education ambassadors. A middle-management informant from HEI Beta summarized the thoughts of the many – international alumni bring credibility to the case-study HEIs. The informants described ideas that they have to include international alumni in to the education export efforts of the HEIs. A repeating idea was that the international alumni could help the case-study HEIs in understanding the local culture or to bring from their respective market areas leads for the HEIs. Observing these idea from NPG model's perspective, they seem to fit the model seamlessly.

Based on the interviews, the principles of the NPG model are visible in the case-study HEIs. International alumni networks are being developed, HEIs regard international alumni as partners and different units operate based on result oriented goals implemented in the strategies of the HEIs. It is worth noticing, that the NPG features are most visible in the comments of top-management and middle-management, but hard to notice in the answers of the non-management informants. This can mean many things, but to the author it seemed like the NPG features were still on an administrative and strategic level instead of the day-to-day work of the non-management informants.

Based on the above, it seems that the HEIs are not utilizing the potential the international alumni have and it is evident that NPG is currently in a state of expansion – it will take time before NPG model will be the dominant model regarding education export and international alumni in HEIs.

"Hmmm... I feel that the fact that we, in general, regard our students as important partners even after graduation [is important]. I find it old-fashioned that we would only think about the students while the students are in the HEI and are bringing us funding based on standards. I feel that the students are as important or even more important as alumni after graduation and in working life or wherever the alumni go. And the form of cooperation will always be changing and developing."

Top-management, International Relations Manager, HEI Beta

5.3 Summary of the Results

The result is in many ways expected. One administrative model rarely exists alone, as these models are created and developed to meet the gaps left by other models (Osborne, 2010). NPM and NPG models support each other and act as frames for the case-study HEIs to organise and develop their respected international alumni networks and operations and build the relationship between the institutions and the international alumni. The tasks and roles are far from developed – the author is inclined to argue that based on the interviews they are only in very preliminary stages, but the desire to develop them and utilise the international alumni in projects like education export is evident and the goals have been set either on a strategic level or as financial targets.

The major difficulty identified in developing the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni is lack of resources. Many of the informants stated that focusing on international alumni or alumni in general is important but not as important as something else – daily routines, other strategic projects and other elements, like education export, consume the time the informants and their colleagues have. Alongside with resource issues are problems with the available tools or the way they are used, as the case-study HEIs would like to get more out of their CRM-systems or expand the access to the registers containing the international alumni.

Following the straightforward process introduced by Catanzaro (1988) and Cavanagh (1997) the author of this research reduced, grouped and abstracted the transcribed data that was gathered through the interviews of the informants in the case-study HEIs. As the author grouped and abstracted the data in the transcribed interviews, eight subcategories and three parent categories were revealed under the top category. The subcategories were repeating customer, donor, mentor / guest lecturer, source of prestige, member of the HE community, education ambassador, quality assurance and source of leads. The three parent categories were customer, stakeholder and partner and the top category is, obviously, the role of the international alumni in HEI.

The subcategories under the three top categories (customer, stakeholder, partner) are, in the opinion of the author, also fitting to act as examples of NPM and / or NPG models. For example, the customer category places the international alumni in the role of customers purchasing education and as such the relationship between the case-HEI and the international alumni is

a customer relationship. This is a typical approach in NPM model that views service users as customers (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011), but, as stated earlier in this research, it is not very popular approach within the case-study HEIs.

Alongside the customer -parent category, the author identified through abstraction and transcription the stakeholder -parent category. The stakeholder places international alumni as donors, mentors / guest lecturers, sources of prestige and members of the community. It differentiates from the customer -parent category by giving a more versatile role to the international alumni and by moving onwards from the simple customer relationship. In the opinion of the author, this category has elements from both NPM and NPG – a sort of mixed model that views international alumni as stakeholders that can actively or passively contribute and benefit from their relationships with the case-study HEIs.

Lastly, the author identified the partner -parent category. This category approaches the international alumni as partners, external and somewhat independent actors from the case-study HEIs, but part of the HEI network. The case-HEI has a coordination role in the network and the international alumni have separate roles, like education ambassador, quality assurance or sources of leads, that they fulfil and gain benefits from, meanwhile bringing added value to the case-study HEIs.

Top category	Parent category (roles)	Subcategory (tasks)	Model	Rationalization (why)
The roles and tasks of the international alumni in HEI	Customer	Repeating customer Consumer	NPM	The international alumni are seen as customers by the HEIs. They consume the education products produced by the HEIs.
	Stakeholder	Donor Mentor / Guest lecturer Source of prestige for the HEI Member of the HEI community	Mixed Model	Both models are visible through interdependence of the parties. International alumni are viewed as stakeholders that bring prestige and donations to HEIs, but also benefit from the HEIs.
	Partner	Education export ambassador Providing quality assurance for education export purposes Source of leads in education export	NPG	The international alumni are seen as partners and part of the HEIs' networks. HEIs coordinate the international alumni, who act independently within the given frame and (possibly) receive compensation for their work.

Table 10. Identified tasks and roles designated by the case-study HEIs to the international alumni. (Aku Aarva)

The subcategories were created by reducing the transcribed interview material into key word lists and categorizing them together to identify subcategories. These subcategories formed

parent categories under the top category, which was the role of the international alumni in HEI.

Regarding the tasks and roles of the international alumni related to education export efforts, not much has been done so far. According to the elite-informants, there have been some attempts to utilize international alumni as education export ambassadors and there have been a few leads arriving from the international alumni. Overall, it is quite clear that based on the data collected from the informants the case-study HEIs still must develop the networks and the processes regarding both education export and the international alumni, if they want to benefit from the possibilities that they have already recognized. This might prove to be a problem, as one informant speculated.

“This [prioritising international alumni] is in general like... and I have seen this for years now, and it is kind of understandable and natural, that this internationalisation [of HE] is a marginal phenomenon. If we have, for example, 8 000 students and 10 % of those, including exchange students, are foreigners, that means that they are not as relevant in the big picture as the other 90-95 %. So, it is understandable that the development is not as massive, due to emphasis on other issues.”

Middle-management, Head of Department, HEI Beta

The elite-informants in the case-study HEIs all have managed to define various tasks and roles for the international alumni, even though these definitions were not identical. Some elite-informants claimed that the case-study HEIs did not have clear definitions for international alumni nor a clear set of goals for the tasks and roles designated to these operations. This can mean many things, but most likely it must do with issues in information sharing within the case-study HEIs. Overall, the activities directed to specifically international alumni were almost non-existent – they are invited to events targeted to alumni and when faculty members travel, they might meet international alumni, but that is about it. Mentoring and guest lecturing were the most frequently mentioned activities directed to international alumni together with different public events, like graduations.

The rationalisation answers why specific tasks and roles are designated to the international alumni. The tasks and roles the elite-informants in the case-study HEIs either regard the international alumni as direct or indirect sources of additional funding or as part of the community that have a shared interest in seeing the community succeed – or something in between. The

case-study HEIs need something from the international alumni. That is why they are developing international alumni networks and designating tasks and roles to them.

"I feel that, in general, the reason we are working with international alumni is that we regard them as important to us. It is a very old-fashioned perspective to say that students are important to us only as long as they are studying in this house and bringing us money through specific funding criteria. In my opinion, a student is as or even more important after graduation and in working life or wherever they go. I want to underline that the student is important to use after graduation because of the new roles and continued cooperation that keeps changing form."

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta

As a conclusion, it can be stated that according to the elite-informants and the analysis conducted by the author, the international alumni could have a real impact in the Finnish HE and education export efforts of the case-study HEIs. The tasks and roles designated to the international alumni and the networks the case-study HEIs are building contain a lot of potential, but the question of resources and prioritising is limiting progress. The relationship of the case-study HEIs and international alumni can grow into a mutually beneficial agreement between parties, if the case-study HEIs invest in it enough. It is likely that new forms of tasks and roles will be designated to the international alumni.

The author ends his analysis with a quote from one of the elite-informants that summarizes the overall picture regarding the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni.

"International alumni operations are part of the functions of the HEI. Why? Indeed, why? That is a question, I am asking myself quite often. Why are we doing this? Because we need the accreditations. But who has a need for this? Is it the alumni, who have an urge to give something back from what they got from us as students? And of course, it is our need for more students and money. We are always looking for more and more [education export] cases. Real company contacts and so forth. These are all important things, but I can't yet identify a clear structure here for the international alumni."

Operational level, Secretary (education export and alumni), HEI Beta

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The idea for this research began to grow in the mind of the author quite a few years ago. This research continued the author's earlier research regarding alumni and will most likely not be the last of its kind. However, the key stimulus to conduct this research came from the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministerial Strategy (2009), where a clear goal and emphasis was given to utilising alumni more and advancing in education export. It was but a few lines of policy that guided the Finnish HEIs to focus on developing alumni networks, but it was enough to underline the importance of the research topic to the author.

The author identified a clear gap in research regarding the tasks and roles of international alumni. The topic has not been researched before in Finland and from the Finnish perspective and it can offer valuable new information that can be utilised in further research, policy making, education export and HEIs operations. The results of this research are relevant both for theoretical and practical perspectives and purposes as the gathered data was first analysed with a data-driven approach and then with a theory-driven approach.

The main rationale of this research was to understand what tasks and roles Finnish HEIs designate to the international alumni. In addition, this research aimed to identify possible effects these relationships might have for the education export efforts of the Finnish HEIs. The author chose education export as the context of the research due to its topicality and the emphasis it had in the Ministerial Strategy (2009). The author chose the theoretical frame – the NPM and NPG models – as the research was related to internal and external relationships, customer-orientation and education as a product or service. This allowed the author to take the rather abstract idea of international alumni tasks and roles into a practical level with the informants, that ranged from top-management levels to operational levels in the case- HEIs.

The research question of this research was:

What kind of tasks and roles the case-study HEIs designate to the international alumni in general and regarding education export, and why?

This research applied the case-study approach (Yin, 2014). The author conducted semi-structured interviews to seven elite-informants in two case-study HEIs in Finland. The interview frame was built using data collected from multiple sources, like the data about alumni operations in the websites of Finnish and international HEIs and the extensive literature review that

the author conducted (*see chapter 7.1 Classification of Prior Research Based on Theme and Topic*). The author also conducted three test interviews that helped him identify important topics and spot issues in the interview structure and format and discussed with prominent professionals working with education export or alumni operations in Finnish HEIs. This thorough approach to the case-study helped the author finalise the interview frame for the semi-structured interview and, in the end, contribute to this field.

The case-study HEIs were chosen based on their approach on international alumni. HEI Alfa operated with a centralised administrative structure and HEI Beta with a decentralised administrative structure. The author chose case-study HEIs with different administrative structure because he identified it as a significant difference that divided the HE field in Finland. The informants were chosen based on their expert position and expertise as well as a certain balance between the case-study HEIs: The informants' hierarchical positions within the case-study HEIs are similar on every managerial level.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analysed in a way that the anonymity of the informants and institutions remained protected (*see Chapter Four: Methodology*). The collected interview data was transcribed and analysed by reducing, grouping and transcribing the data according to the guidelines of Catanzaro (1988) and Cavanagh (1997). The collected data was approached first through a data-driven analysis and then a theory-driven analysis method. This was done because the research phenomenon had not been studied before and the author aimed to be thorough with the ample data he had collected. The data-driven analysis enabled the author to identify what the elite-informants regarded as the tasks and roles of the international alumni. The author reduced and grouped the data and identified nine subcategories or tasks and three parent categories or roles that the elite-informants designated to the international alumni (*see Table 9. Tasks and roles of the international alumni*).

6.1 Outcomes of the Research

The author claims that the unique approaches the case-study HEIs had chosen regarding the administrative structure of the alumni operations affected the outcomes of the operations. The author argues, that the centralised alumni operations model in HEI Alfa requires a clear set of strategic and operational goals as well as enough organisational power and resources directed to the individual or department responsible for alumni operations. HEI Alfa would do well to set strategic level goals for alumni operations both generally and in financial operations (education export etc.).

The author also argues that the decentralised alumni operations structure in HEI Beta can't function properly without a formal structure and division of responsibilities – even though there is no central figure directing the operations. It is also necessary to keep in mind that having multiple people responsible for alumni operations instead of having one or more full-time employees responsible solely for alumni operations does not mean more resources – it can mean less.

Overall, it is clear for the author that the international alumni operations and the tasks and roles designated to the international alumni are still developing. Neither of the case-study HEIs, regardless to their administrative approaches, have been able to set clear goals or strategies for their international alumni operations. The tools, like the CRM-systems, used by the case-study HEIs are old-fashioned and underused.

However, the tasks and roles identified by the elite-informants are remarkably similar in both case-study HEIs. The author identified all nine tasks from the data in both case-study HEIs and could have grouped them into the three distinct roles simply using data from just one case-HEI without this affecting the result. This means, to the author, that the work carried out by the case-study HEIs are heading to the same direction regardless of the chosen administrative solution. Even though some of the tasks designated to the international alumni are still only on paper and the most common tasks are mentoring and other practical work, tasks like acting as quality assurance or as education ambassadors are common in both case-study HEIs. To the author, this shows that international alumni are seen as beneficial to the education export efforts of the case-study HEIs.

Analysing the data from a theory-driven perspective was very interesting. The literature review and data from HEIs' websites revealed that, from the perspective of education export and international alumni, NPG is currently not the only dominant administrative model. NPM model, what some might call the predecessor of NPG, is still perceived in the collected data, even though the traditional customer-oriented focus is not that perceivable.

The author regards the role of customer and the subsequent tasks typical for organisations utilising NPM driven approach, the role of stakeholder and subsequent tasks as typical for organisations utilising a mixed approach of NPM and NPG and finally the role of partner and subsequent tasks as typical for organisations utilising the NPG approach. The results (*see Table 10. Identified tasks and roles designated by the case-study HEIs to the international alumni*) show that the international alumni have many roles and tasks in the case-study HEIs and that these roles are tied closely to the NPM and NPG theories.

This research is built on the author's previous research but is also a continuation of prior research (*see 7.1 Classification of Prior Research Based on Theme and Topic*) conducted on alumni. Research conducted on building and developing alumni networks (see Baron, 2015; Pihkanen, 2014; Toivanen, 2015 and Pakarinen, 2012) as well as research conducted on alumni as donors (see Abendroth, 2015 & McDearmon, 2013) or alumni as working life connections (Hohenthal, 2012) all act as inspiration and research foundation to this research.

The first important conclusion of this research is that the development of international alumni networks has not taken significant steps forward despite the Ministerial Strategy goal and changed legislation enabling tuition fees for students from non-EU/ETA countries. Both case-study HEIs have rather underdeveloped international alumni networks and operations regarding them are in initial stages.

The second important conclusion is that the case-study HEIs view the potential and existing tasks and roles of the international alumni quite similarly. This means, that even though the plans regarding international alumni and education export have not yet come to fruition, the foundation for future operations exists. This enables the development of the networks and operations with relative ease, as soon as enough resources are invested into them. This is a significant result, as – at least in the case-study HEIs – it shows that development has now begun and stagnation is not the status quo.

The third important conclusion is the fact that in the case-study HEIs, the NPG model is utilized consciously or unconsciously. International alumni, as partners of the case-study HEIs, and the role of the HEI as a coordinator of external actors show that NPM is not the only dominant model – elements of NPG are visible and active. This was somewhat unexpected, as the NPG model is not as well-grounded a model as the NPM is in the HE-sector.

The fourth conclusion regards the motivation of the case-study HEIs. The analysis revealed that there are different motivational factors – additional funding, reputation management, community spirit – that affect the elite-informants' views. However, there is an underlying tone regarding alumni as source of funding that could be detected from the elite-informants. It is the opinion of the author, that the elite-informants are hesitant towards designating international alumni with tasks and roles that would bring the case-study HEIs additional funding. This might be because of the changes in legislation regarding tuition fees are very recent and there is a long tradition of tuition free higher education in Finland. The case-study HEIs have trouble treating international alumni as customers, customer acquirers or marketers because they have trouble with the idea of selling education.

The utilisation of the results in this research are versatile. First, this research can be used as a foundation for additional research conducted by the author or other researchers. The tasks and roles designated for the international alumni can be analysed further and the motivational factors affecting the case-study HEIs operations researched more thoroughly. The results are also interesting internationally as data that can be used to compare the tasks and roles designated to international alumni in foreign HEIs.

Second, the Finnish HEIs can utilize the results in their own work. Even though this is a case-study, understanding how these theoretical models are active in two Finnish HEIs is insightful. It is also possible to develop the categorisation regarding the international alumni tasks and roles in HEIs further and utilize it as the HEIs develop their international alumni activities.

Third, the tasks and roles have been identified and the motivational factors behind them revealed. It is possible to develop international alumni operations and networks significantly based on the results of this research. In addition, the results can be used to boost the education export efforts of the Finnish HEIs. Understanding what tasks and roles the international alumni can be designated with can be a differentiating factor between HEIs that are competing

with each other in Finland, their international counterparts and companies in the global education export market.

This research also shows that at least in this case, the NPG model is visible in the HE-sector. This is a side-product of the research and not something that the author set out to prove, but it has value as well.

The results of this research are important also from a policy perspective. The Ministerial Strategy, referred to in the very first chapter of this research, emphasises international alumni as a tool to internationalise Finnish HEIs and to develop education export. However, based on the results of this research, and the relatively slow development of international alumni operations in the case-study HEIs, the author will make the following policy suggestion.

The Ministry of Education and Culture published the Higher Education Vision 2030 in October 2017 and has begun to implement it through five executive groups and five task groups. One of the groups targets the public funding mechanisms of Finnish HEIs to fulfil the HE Vision 2030.

The author of this research suggests,

- 1) that the work group evaluates the possibility of adding a funding mechanism measuring the development of the international alumni operations and networks of the Finnish HEIs. The mechanism could be included in the strategic funding segment, which content is decided by the Ministry of Education and Culture as part of their strategic guidance processes.*
- 2) that as part of their strategic specialisation, some of the Finnish HEIs would focus in building a global alumni network. Choosing alumni as a strategic focus would distinguish these HEIs and create competitive advantage against Finnish and international competition.*

The author's policy suggestions are based on the Ministry of Education and Culture's previous focus on international alumni and the possibilities the international alumni networks have. Through funding, the Ministry of Education and Culture could persuade HEIs to put more emphasis in developing alumni operations. Through specialisation, some Finnish HEIs could create competitive advantage for themselves and stand out from the mass in the eyes of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the public and the customers.

6.2 Assessment of the Reliability and Validity of the Research

The author identified possible biases and other issues regarding the research topic already in very initial stages of the research. According to Wolcott (1995), the idea of validity is unclear, especially when it is tied to a qualitative case-study. Every case is unique, so repeating the results of a research focused on culture or people might be near impossible.

However, the author wanted to reach a level of validity and credibility that would sooth the minds of the readers. Therefore, the author described the steps taken during the research process, the decisions and circumstances that led to the decisions he made. This was especially important in the classification of the research data, the grouping, reduction and abstraction, as the reader must have a clear understanding of the roots and foundations of the classification (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2014). The author described the flow of the interviews by using quotations where feasible – to paint a picture of the data collection phase.

After the analysis was done, the author took a last step back and looked at the big picture and the outcome of the research to spot mistakes, errors and failures in the process. Overall, the author was happy with the process, transparency and description of the events that occurred during the process.

There are, obviously, limitations to the research that the author conducted. As a case-study, the results can't be expanded to cover all the Finnish HEIs and as the informants are faculty members and the international alumni are left without a voice, the results only represent a rather one-sided view of the topic. However, these are not mistakes or errors – they are decisions that the author made during the time he narrowed the research topic. The author made these decisions, because the topic in questions had not been studied extensively in Finland and as such there is was previous research to use as a foundation. The necessary foundation, at least to some extent, has now been created and the results of this research can be utilized in the future, by others.

6.3 Further Research Topics

There is room for additional research in Finland regarding this topic. The first and obvious topic would be to conduct a similar research, but from the point of view of the international alumni. This would enable the researchers to compare the views of HEI faculty and the alumni and see what the possible differences are. The author feels this is almost necessary, as a one-

sided view can distort reality and guide HEIs to the wrong direction. The motivating factors from international alumni perspective have not been studied at all in Finland – what drives them to participate and give back?

Second additional research topic that the author suggests, is the creation and development of the alumni networks. During the interviews, many informants mentioned the idea of growing students into alumni. This was not dealt within the analysis extensively, as it was not directly connected to the research topic of this research, but as an idea it is worth further research. Are the current students of Finnish HEIs connected to alumni during their studies? Are the Finnish HEIs trying to systematically grow students into alumni and if so, what are the methods used? If not, what should be done to enable this path and would it be beneficial to the HEIs and the students?

Thirdly, some form of policy research would be useful as the Ministerial strategy term has been concluded and a new term has begun. What are the Ministerial policy emphasis regarding the development of alumni operations in the Finnish HEIs in future? Will there be some form of support from the Ministry in developing alumni operations?

Lastly, the regional effects of international alumni would be an important research topic. Especially in universities of applied sciences, which have a specific duty to focus on regional development, the international alumni could bring much untapped potential. A research from a local and regional perspective would therefore be justified.

6.4 Afterword

This research breaks new ground. The tasks and roles of the international alumni in Finnish HEIs have not been studied before and the potential the international alumni have been left mostly unnoticed. According to this research, the NPM and NPG -models are visible in the roles designated to the international alumni – customer, stakeholder and partner. Understanding this allows the HEIs and policy makers to better foresee future development and implement different solutions to problems on the way of functioning international alumni networks, that truly benefit education export.

This research was an interesting journey for the author. It produced a firm sense of understanding of the dynamics and nuances of academic research. The goals set in the beginning of this journey were met and the research question was answered – a success in both ways. The

author will continue with the research topic in the future, but for now the task is done and it is up to the Finnish HEIs to develop their international alumni networks further, so that the community can benefit the education export efforts of the Finnish HEIs and fulfil the goals set internally and externally. The author ends this research with a quote that best describes to him the potential the international alumni possess and what is the risk of forgetting it.

“Street credibility and prestige for the higher education institutions. International alumni are our ambassadors, showing globally how good – or bad – the education we provide can be. We must always recognize this.”

Middle-management, Head of Department, HEI Beta

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Elements of the NPG, in contrast to PA and the NPM (Osborne, 2006)	26
Table 2. Doctrinal components of NPM (Hood, 1991, pp. 4-5)	29
Table 3. The Comparison Between Government and Governance (Anttiroiko & Haveri, 2007, p. 168).....	33
Table 4. Created by the author using sources by Denzin (1978, 2006), Patton (1999, 2001) and Creswell (1998).....	39
Table 5. Seven reasons to choose interview. (Hirsjärvi et al., 2014, p. 205. Translated by the author).....	42
Table 6. Features of case-study HEIs (data collected from annual reports and online sources)	46
Table 7. Informants (Source: Research Interviews)	51
Table 8. Comparison of Qualitative Analysis Approaches. Thomas (2006)	58
Table 9. Tasks and roles of international alumni. (Aku Aarva)	76
Table 10. Identified tasks and roles designated by the case-study HEIs to the international alumni. (Aku Aarva).....	85
 Figure 1. Governance path. (Aku Aarva, 2017)	9
Figure 2. Forms of alumni activities in Finland. (Mira Network, 2004, p. 15).....	19
Figure 3. Alumni activities in Finland in Autumn 2004. (Mira Networks, 2004, p. 15).....	19
Figure 4. Research interview categories by Hirsjärvi et al. (2014, pp. 207-212). Formed by the author.....	41
Figure 5. Three ways to analyse qualitative data (Eskola & Suoranta, 1996)	56
Figure 6. Inductive analysis steps (Thomas, 2006).....	59

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APPENDIXES

Classification of Prior Research Based on Theme and Topic

Author(s)	Topic name	Content	Method	Sorting
Baron, J. (2015), USA	Building a chain of success in marketing higher education: the alumni connection	Analysing the usefulness of Capella University's virtual intranet for alumni, business and staff.	Qualitative analysis / classification	Alumni networks
Abendroth, M. (2015), USA	Growing in Multicultural Education with Alumni	Case study of three alumni about multicultural education.	Case study, qualitative interviews, data analysis	Fundraising
McDearmon, T. J. (2013), USA	Hail to Thee, Our Alma Mater: Alumni Role Identity and the Relationship to Institutional Support Behaviors	Studying how the alumni perceive themselves and their roles in the institution after graduation	Quantitative survey,	Fundraising
Ebert, K., Axelson, L., Harbor, J. (2015), Sweden	Opportunities and Challenges for Building Alumni Networks in Sweden: A Case Study of Stockholm University	Case study: how to manage alumni relations in Stockholm Uni	Case study, descriptive	Alumni networks
Daly, S., (2013), UK	Philanthropy, the New Professionals and Higher Education: The Advent of Directors of Development and Alumni Relations	The paper examines how the professional identities being cultivated by directors of development inform and shape philanthropic fundraising in British universities.	qualitative methodological framework, semi-structured interviews with 17 individuals carried out in May–June 2011 using grounded theory approach,	Fundraising
Stevick, T. R., (2010), USA	Integrating Development, Alumni Relations, and Marketing for Fundraising Success	Creating effective combinations for alumni fundraising.	Case study, descriptive	Alumni networks, fundraising
Rissmeyer, P. A., (2010), USA	Student Affairs and Alumni Relations	Collaboration of student affairs and alumni relations in HEI's	Literature review	Alumni networks
Amber L. Stephenson, David B. Yerger, (2014), USA	Optimizing engagement: brand identification and alumni donation behaviors	The survey findings showed that brand identification correlated with choice to donate, increased donation dollar amount, and the number of donations. Findings also suggested that interpretation of brand, prestige, satisfaction with student	Quantitative survey, case study	Fundraising

		affairs, and participation were positively associated with identification		
Pumeratz, R. K., (2005), USA	Alumni-in-Training: A Public Roadmap for Success	Interviews on key figures in CSU and peer institutions about alumni involvement in fundraising	Qualitative interviews, data analysis	Fundraising
Pihkanen, J., (2014), Finland	Utilizing social media in environmental technology alumni networks (Sosiaalisen median hyödyntäminen ympäristötekniikan alumninyhteyksissä)	The purpose of the thesis was to create a new channel for the alumni of Savonia. In addition, the thesis goes through specifics regarding the careers of the alumni in question.	Data analysis	Alumni networks,
Toivanen, M., (2015), Finland	Report: Starting the alumni network of the environmental technology degree programme in Savonia (Ympäristötekniikan alumnitoiminnan käynnistys Savoniassa)	A report of the project aiming to develop alumni activities and networks in Savonia as part of a MoE supported project.	Report	Alumni networks
Pakarinen, T., (2012), Finland	Oulu UAS's alumni: developing activities from student perspective (Oulun seudun ammattikorkeakoulun Alumni try:n toiminnan kehittäminen opiskelijoiden näkökulmasta)	Developing the alumni network from the student perspective.	Quantitative survey	Alumni networks
Ahlfors, N., Portin, S., (2013), Finland	The Alumni Profile of Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences (Haaga-Helia ammattikorkeakoulun alumniprofiilin kartoitus)	Research on the profile of the alumni and their lack of activity in alumni events.	Case study, quantitative survey	Alumni networks
Eskola, E., (2012), Finland	Developing the alumni activities for faculty of culture alumni (Kulttuurituotannon alumnitoiminnan kehittämishanke)	The thesis is a survey of the present demand of alumni activities in Metropolia University's faculty of culture management.	Case study, quantitative survey, brainstorming and World Café -method	Alumni networks
Kauppinen, K., (2009), Finland	12 steps for Aalto university alumni activities (12 askelta Aalto-yliopiston alumnitoiminnalle)	Listing 12 steps for development of Aalto uni's alumni activities	Qualitative interviews, data gathering	Alumni networks, fundraising
Hohenthal, T., (2012), Finland	Building working life companionship (Työelämäkumppanuutta rakentamassa)	A report of a three year ESR-project with a goal to utilize alumni networks in working life cooperation.	Strategy analysis, qualitative interview,	Working life connections
Koikkalainen, A., (2007), Finland	Developing international alumni activities from customer management perspective (Kansainvälisen	The study was conducted from the perspective of customer relations management	Strategy analysis, qualitative interview,	Fundraising

	alumnitoiminnan kehittäminen asiakkuuden hallinnan näkökulmasta)			
Paakkulainen, M., (2004), Finland	Alumni activities in Finland in Autumn 2004 (Alumni-toiminta Suomessa syksyllä 2004)	A summary consisting of several studies	Strategy analysis, qualitative interview,	General study
Lyytinen, A., Kohtamäki, V., Pekkola, E., Kivistö, J., Hölttä, S. (2012), Finland	Quality management of higher education institutions stakeholder operations (Korkeakoulujen sidosryhmäyhteistyön laadunhallinta)	The study was conducted as a response to needs for information on stakeholder cooperation at higher education institutions and the related quality management efforts.	The study project comprised three phases: background analysis, mapping the current status and outlining the future	Fundraising, alumni networks, general study

Semi-Structured Interview Frame

Kansainvälisten alumnien tehtävät ja toimenkuvat

- 1) Minkälaista kansainvälistä alumnitoimintaa korkeakoululla on?
- 2) Kuvaile kansainvälisen alumnin ja korkeakoulun suhdetta – miten se näyttäytyy?
- 3) Mihin kansainvälisellä alumnitoiminnalla pyritään ja miten suhteita hoidetaan ja kehitetään?
- 4) Onko kansainvälisillä alumneilla roolia koulutusvientipyrkimysten ja -päämäärienne edistämiseksi? Voitko antaa tästä jotain esimerkkejä?
- 5) Hyödynnetäänkö kansainvälisiä alumneja tietoisesti tai suunnitelmallisesti koulutusviennissä? Millä tavalla?
 - a. Mitä työkaluja korkeakoululla on käytössään kansainvälisen alumnitoiminnan tukemiseksi?
 - b. Mitä kansainvälinen alumnitoiminta merkitsee mielestäsi korkeakoululle?
 - c. Miten alumnien kanssa pidetään yhteyttä?
 - d. Miten kuvailisit korkeakoulunne koulutusvientipyrkimyksiä ja päämääriä?
 - e. Edistääkö tai haittaako alumnien ja korkeakoulun suhde jollakin tavalla koulutusvientipyrkimyksiä?